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# THE LIMITS OF PURPOSE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

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# THE LIMITS OF PURPOSE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

By  
J. L. STOCKS



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## PREFACE

THE papers included in this volume have been written over a good number of years. One of them is as much as twenty years old, and one other was written before the war; but most have been written here at Manchester in the last seven years. This fact and the diversity of their subjects makes it impossible to claim for them generally any substantial unity. But since they are, to the writer at least, not merely a collection of occasional papers, it may be useful to say in a few words, by way of preface, something about their character and interconnections.

The first four papers were written in connection with one another. They represent an attempt to formulate the basis of a non-utilitarian or intuitive ethic, and have for their central theme a discussion of the notion of purpose. The view maintained is that this notion has been too readily accepted as characteristic of the higher human activities generally, and of morality in particular; and that, valuable as the notion is in its place, it must be reduced to strict subordination if the central character of art or morality is to be truly stated. The acceptance of purpose by modern philosophers has of course been influenced, not merely by modern utilitarianism, but also by the powerful example of Aristotle, who regarded action as essentially purposive and recognised no higher practical category than that of a good to be achieved by action. The paper on "The



Golden Mean" (XI.) makes an attempt to come to terms with Aristotle; and in a different sense the paper on Plato's "Tripartite Soul," written many years before, has its relevance. What applies here is the notion of the active self as composed, not of co-ordinate elements, like the modern instincts or the psychologist's trio, cognition, conation, affection, but of strata, higher and lower, the higher presupposing and growing out of the lower. Some such relation is that required by the argument of the first four papers to hold between purpose and the moral (or æsthetic) motive. The supersession of purpose by these interests which is there asserted is similar to the supersession of appetite and temper by philosophy, for which Plato argues in the *Republic*. These six papers, then, constitute to some extent, a connected contribution to moral philosophy.

Another group of papers, mainly early in date, represents contributions to the history of philosophy rather than to philosophy itself. All concern the Greeks, and the two papers last mentioned, since in form at least they are historical, have been placed in this group at the end of the volume. The paper on "Epicurean Induction," a by-product of work undertaken for the new edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek lexicon, is an attempt to call attention to an interesting but neglected chapter of Greek logic. If the standard works, like Prantl's well-known *History of Logic*, had treated this Epicurean development with any seriousness, there would have been no excuse for writing, still less for reprinting, the paper; but, as it is, in spite of the imperfections of my account, of which I am fully conscious, it seems to me worth reprinting, in the hope that it may have



some little effect in bringing about a fuller and fairer treatment of the *De Signis* in future histories. The other papers in this group call for no special comment.

In between these two groups of papers are inserted three, one concerned with politics and the other two with logic, or at least with thought. As for politics, it has always been a subject with which, for reasons good or bad, philosophers were inclined to busy themselves, and it is a pity if now, when current confusions about democracy and representation are asking for dispassionate examination, the philosopher should decide to abdicate in favour of the specialist. Though I am not prepared to prove that what I have written on "Representation" is philosophy, I am ready to argue that there is no question concerning human activity which cannot profitably be made a subject for philosophical enquiry. Logic is in a different position, being still at the present day unquestioned as a philosophical discipline. Like my respected friend and former tutor, Dr. Schiller, though for rather different reasons, I am far from satisfied with the tradition on this side. I am not convinced of the philosophical value of much that passes traditionally as logic, and I am inclined to suspect that submission to a faulty tradition has concealed from the view of philosophers questions about thought and thinking more important philosophically than those which logic is accustomed to put. One of these two logical papers (VI.) discusses the nature of logic in the light of this suspicion; the other (VII.) discusses an aspect of thought – its unity in time – which the logical text-books commonly ignore.

I am indebted to the editors of the following publications for permission to reprint matter which has appeared in their pages: *Classical Quarterly*, *Hibbert Journal*, *Mind*, *Monist*, *Philosophy* (formerly *Journal of Philosophical Studies*), *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

J. L. S.

Manchester,  
*December, 1931.*

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# I

## THE LIMITS OF PURPOSE <sup>1</sup>

### I

FROM the time of Aristotle to the present day it has been more or less common form among philosophers to regard purposive action as the summit of human achievement on the practical side. Man was the rational animal, and in the field of conduct he proved his rationality so far as he made his action a well-conceived step towards a clearly-defined end. Thus Aristotle starts his *Ethics* from the accepted view that every art and science, and equally every action and pursuit, is directed to a good, and forthwith accepts the description of the good as that at which they all aim. The definition of this good, which is the aim of the ethical enquiry, will be the definition of the great overruling purpose which holds all human activities together and to which, ideally and ultimately, every detail of each is subservient. In defining it Aristotle conceives himself not as improvising or inventing or imaginatively idealising, but as engaged in the analysis of fact. For this purpose is generally operative even where it is not intelligently grasped; but the highest achievements of man depend upon its being clearly grasped and consciously executed: "Surely the knowledge of it," says Aristotle, "is of great importance for life; like archers, if we *aim*, we shall be more likely to *hit*."

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1927.



On this view, fully developed and fully responsible activity is the enlightened choice of means to an end; and the complete statement of the grounds for any course of action will relate it to the one ultimate end, as the best contribution towards it which seems in the circumstances to be available. Room is left, of course, for levels of activity below the purposive, but not for levels above it. Below purpose we have the more obscure states called impulse, instinct, appetite, and so on, directed to nearer ends, and not necessarily involving consciousness even of those. In these purpose is rooted as thought is rooted in sensation. The parallel developments of thought and will which differentiate the human from the lower levels of animal life are preconditioned by processes of a type shared by the whole animal world. Even in the most perfectly developed human being the complete and continuous dominance of the one ultimate purpose is never achieved. The wisest of men will hunger and thirst and sleep; he will be overcome, if only for a moment, by emotion; economy of effort will lead him to trust for much to habit and rule of thumb, and to concentrate largely on ends which are not ultimate.

Purpose, then, has its lower limits. There may be room for doubt as to their precise definition; and the best way of conceiving the relation of higher and lower is here, as in the parallel case of sensation, still to-day a main centre of philosophical and psychological controversy. The conception of a single ultimate end is also doubtful. It is, in fact, not much favoured by modern thought; we no longer think of our Ethics as the search for a definition of the supreme good. But this does not mean that the conception of human action as essentially purposive



has been surrendered. It means that our ethics is less practical in aim, less directed to helping men in the perplexities of conduct, more critical and metaphysical in character. It means also that, as compared with the ancient Greeks, we moderns are sceptics and empiricists. We distrust the power of thought to formulate a reliable answer to such a question. We do not say, "There is no moral ideal; there is no single purpose in which every purpose is fulfilled." We say<sup>1</sup>: "Life is a conflict, solved like all conflicts only by compromise; and compromises are indefinable: the Heaven of fulfilled desire is at best only a vision." Or we say<sup>2</sup>: "The good, the moral ideal, is capable only of a formal and abstract definition; and the good man will be found in practice guiding himself by no hazardous attempt at a definition, but relying largely on the best judgment of his generation and concentrating his efforts without reserve on 'some work of recognised utility.'" The clear-cut Greek conception of a *summum bonum* is not surrendered; still less is it replaced by another conception equally definite; it is overlaid with hesitations and reservations and qualifications until it is almost unrecognisable. The unification of the moral life in a single distinctive ultimate purpose seems to remain in the form of a "mere idea" or unrealisable ideal.

Now I am going to suggest that much of this doubt and uncertainty arises from failing to keep separate questions that ought to be distinguished, and from obstinately continuing to group under a single term aspects of conduct which require to be kept apart.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. E. Taylor, *Problem of Conduct*, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. T. H. Green, *Prolegomena*, Book III, Chapter I.



In taking as my subject the limits of purpose it is not the lower limits that I have in mind, but the upper. The lower limits are amply recognised, perhaps even at the present day exaggerated; an upper limit seems not to be effectively recognised at all. What I wish to argue is that as soon as purpose is precisely defined it becomes clear that it accounts for none of the highest human activities; that, on the contrary, the very existence of art, of morality, of religion, of genuine thought and knowledge, depends on the ability of man to rise above the level of purpose. In the higher animal, if man still claims that name, purpose in a sense supersedes appetite and impulse; in that same sense, I shall argue, these interests and activities involve the supersession of purpose. My thesis, in short, is that limits are set to purpose by art and poetry and history, by science and philosophy, by morality and by religion.

## 2

Clearly I must begin by giving some definition of "purpose." By purpose I mean primarily the concentration of effort on bringing about a certain result. Its varieties are those of the results contemplated, which are called the end. If the result is sufficiently distant, *e.g.*, if a politician of the present day is credited with the purpose of establishing a United States of Europe, the end, though particular, may be regarded as the central unifying principle of a whole life or the greater part of it. But clearly it will not account for everything in that life, even during the period of its dominance. And, besides that, there is no finality in events. The ripples of circumstance



pass quickly out of sight and beyond calculation. . . . Obviously a particular event, whether near or distant, can possess no absolute value.

But it is not necessary, of course, to rest in the particular. Purpose can also be conceived more generally by generalising the result at which it aims. And so we get a notion like the greatest happiness of the greatest number. This famous phrase does not represent an ultimate infinitely distant event, but rather a *type* of result which a man may be conceived as always concentrated on in every action. Our definition of purpose is to be interpreted as including the general direction of effort to a general end or type of result such as this.

The case becomes more complicated when we turn to the formulæ of self-realisation. When Green tells us<sup>1</sup> that "the perfection of human character—a perfection of individuals which is also that of society, and of society which is also that of individuals—is for man the only object of absolute or intrinsic value," and that this perfection consists "in a fulfilment of man's capabilities according to the divine idea," he seems to think partly at least of a type of result to be achieved by action. When he opposes to the utilitarian formula his own doctrine as "the theory of the good as human perfection," he clearly thinks of his good as something to be gradually realised and brought about, as an end or possible result of action. Similarly, when he is arguing for virtue rather than pleasure as the common good, he lays great stress on the notion of development.<sup>2</sup> "The idea of the good is an idea of something which man should become for the sake of becoming

<sup>1</sup> *Prol.*, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283, 284.



it, or in order to fulfil his capabilities, and in so doing to satisfy himself." In the complex involutions of Green's thought there are other elements, due to the influence of Kant, and even of Aristotle himself; but the main stream represents the moral will as purposive in the sense of my definition. The decisive evidence is the emphasis on development. For purpose is a forward-looking attitude, one which scrutinises the present for its possibilities and values it for what it can make of it.

A purposive interpretation of human action, then, will be an interpretation of it in terms of the result or type of result to which it is directed. If such analysis is taken as ultimate and final, morality must be so interpreted; that is to say, the moral factor in conduct must be explained as devotion to a distinctively moral good or end or result. We have already seen that explanations of morality on these lines are actually offered, not merely by hedonists and utilitarians, whose devotion to purpose is notorious, but also by the Kantian and idealist philosopher, T. H. Green. When I, on the other hand, stated as part of my thesis the contention that the moral interest involves the supersession of purpose, I meant to imply that this explanation is illegitimate; that morality is not, as such, a desire to bring anything in particular into the world, that it has no distinctive ideal, that it is not a search among the possibilities of the present for the materials of a better world, that it involves no notion of improvement and no ideas on evolution.

There are two features of the purposive attitude as defined which I wish specially to emphasise because they exhibit from different angles its



essential incompleteness, and thus indicate in advance the nature of the supplement which it requires and the kind of transformation of which it is capable. These are (1) that the effort and energy spent on fulfilling a purpose are not self-justifying, but only, as it were, excused by the result produced; (2) that there is a faulty abstraction in the purposive view of a situation and of the changes made or proposed to be made in it.

Let me explain these two points rather more fully.

(1) So far as you are wholly concentrated on bringing about a certain result, clearly the quicker and easier it is brought about the better. Your resolve to secure a sufficiency of food for yourself and your family will induce you to spend weary days in tilling the ground and tending livestock; but if Nature provided food and meat in abundance ready for the table, you would thank Nature for sparing you much labour and consider yourself so much the better off. An executed purpose, in short, is a transaction in which the time and energy spent on the execution are balanced against the resulting assets, and the ideal case is one in which the former approximate to zero and the latter to infinity. Purpose, then, justifies the efforts it exacts, only conditionally, by their fruits.

(2) My other main criticism of the purposive attitude is its highly abstract view of a situation. This follows, again, directly from the fact that purpose is a dominant interest in a result or type of result. Clearly, any feature of any situation has infinite ramifications and is capable of entering into an infinity of practical combinations; and clearly any



change in a situation will have consequences inexhaustible in range and variety. Purpose assesses the situation and deals with it from a definite angle. The value of each feature is its actual or possible contribution to a single result, and this also is the sole test of the acceptability of any change proposed. Thus what is taken into account is viewed partially and abstractly, and much is forced out of sight altogether by the limitation of the point of view. This may be stated otherwise by saying that the thinking characteristic of the attitude of purpose is at the level of the class concept and the abstract universal. To such thinking the individual always presents itself as an inexhaustible complex, an unknown or unknowable. By abstraction it simplifies the problem, but at the cost of a divorce between knowledge and reality: "The individual may exist," it says, "but it is the universal that is known." In a word, for such thinking, and for purpose which is its practical embodiment, there is no individual.<sup>1</sup>

## 3

I propose now to test this challenge to purpose in the two fields of art and morality. I want to show how these two interests supplement and transform, without abolishing, the purposive attitude. I must point out by way of preliminary the limitations of the question I am asking. My question is not metaphysical. It would not be to the point to enquire as to the status in reality of the things or valuations which

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noticing that the thought embodied in action based on appetite is even more narrowly abstract, owing to the fixity and limitations of our appetites, e.g. hunger constitutes an interest in a situation as food-providing and in things only as foods. Cf. also fear-danger.



art and morality reveal and make manifest. The question is, rather, logical or psychological, as to the nature of the act which has a positively artistic or moral character; and, further, if, as I suppose, other factors not specifically moral or artistic enter into these acts, as to the distinctive contribution of the supervening artistic or moral interest.

I take Art first. What I have to show is that the artistic attitude supervenes upon purpose in such wise that the two cardinal defects with which I have charged purpose are in some degree abolished and made good. I must begin by showing how art enters into and modifies purpose, or, to put the same thing otherwise, in what sense I take the concrete act in which the artistic interest expresses itself to remain nevertheless purposive in character. I mean this to imply that there is no definitely and specifically artistic act or occupation, that all practice of art is simultaneously the practice of something which is not art; and to those two assertions I would add the further venture that, so far as I can see, there is no practice or occupation which will not accept in some degree an infusion of art. Art, in short, is an embroidery upon the fabric of human purpose; and though the fabric is sometimes more and sometimes less suitable, it is never quite hopelessly unsuitable.

Let me give some illustrations. When I ride a bicycle, I have normally a purpose in riding. I want to get somewhere more quickly than I could on foot, or I want exercise for my muscles and air for my lungs. And either of these may be items in a purpose of larger scope – to “keep fit,” to improve my health, and so on. But I may also feel an affection for the machine I ride and a delight in the expertness with



which I manage it. Such feelings do not in any way conflict with or prejudice any purpose I may have in riding. On the contrary, they normally assist it. What here enters is not a new purpose or a further purpose; it is the conscious enjoyment of the means and methods by which the work is done; and it is this that I regard as the distinctively artistic contribution. Common language recognises that even the most mean and sordid occupations admit of such a development. It speaks of artists even in cruelty and in crime. A case of blackmail or murder may be a despicable act and unpleasant to contemplate, but its squalor is felt to be appreciably lessened if in it we can see an artist at work, *i.e.* if we can see the crime as the work of an expert who rejoiced in his own expertness. A similar idea underlies Burke's romantic picture of the high society destroyed by the French Revolution. He calls it an "age of chivalry" with an "unbought grace of life," and defends its patent weaknesses by proclaiming the "sensibility of principle . . . which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."

The practices and occupations just mentioned are not such as are commonly associated with the term "art." They are cited just for that reason, to show how even there art may be said to supervene upon and transform purpose. No less plain is the substratum of purpose in the practices conventionally accepted as artistic. Speech and writing are the tools of the most popular of all the arts. They serve the purpose of communication, which is itself an ingredient in nearly every human enterprise. The artist takes this medium and exploits its resources.



He is in love with his medium and delights in his mastery of it. But it would not be *language* he used if he divorced it from its proper use and purpose. He is still telling something, conveying information, and his art is only fully justified if he tells what he has to tell the better for his art. This is true even of the most rarefied verbal art, lyric poetry; but often the refinements forced on the artist by his delight in the words, and in the rhythms and patterns which they make, seem in the end to have reduced the underlying purpose to the mere shadow of a shade.

I need only remark further under this head that, in spite of the common delusion to the contrary, there is nothing specifically artistic in the representation of a visible object in another medium, *e.g.* in oil paint laid on canvas or a carved block of marble. The fact that such representations can be made by machinery is alone sufficient to prove this. And even when made by man these representations may be a product of a purely purposive attitude. Nearly every tradesman's catalogue gives some examples of representation untouched by art. And Scotland Yard is not made a school of art by its collection of criminals' finger-prints. No. First there was the demand for representations and a trade which arose to meet it. Then this trade transformed itself into art, and continues to-day to transform itself into art, to the extent to which in any given instance of its use the craftsman's delight in the medium mastered and penetrated the product.

We may say, then, generally, that in purpose art finds its opportunity, or that art is essentially parasitic upon purpose. It exists by adopting a purpose foreign to itself and exploiting the medium



by which that purpose is achieved. What I have now to show is that in developing its opportunity it tends to make good the two defects of purpose already explained, or that, unlike the botanical parasite to which I have compared it, so far from stifling and eventually perhaps killing its host, it really brings it the complement which it needs.

I hardly need do more than mention what these two defects were to secure assent to the proposition that the artistic attitude does much to remove them. I complained of purpose, first, that it conferred no positive value on the effort demanded for its fulfilment, and, secondly, that it involved a highly abstract view of a situation. It is surely beyond dispute that the first limitation is corrected in the artistic attitude. The man we call an artist may be, in fact, a lazy fellow, who would like to stop working and live on the money he has saved; but the artist in him cares nothing for the money, little even for the pictures he has made, and demands only further opportunities for the exercise of his artistic gifts. The effort must no doubt be fruitful, it must be successful in producing something worth having; but, that condition satisfied or on the way to satisfaction, the effort is self-justifying.

The other point, the undoing of the abstraction enforced by the purposive attitude, needs more careful statement, because it is the root of the matter. Purpose involves, by general agreement, a distinction between the means and the end. The means represent the best available path in the circumstances to the result which is proposed as end. This involves the consequence that the process as a whole – the achieving of this result by these steps – always fails



to exhibit a complete and satisfying unity. In every calculation of means there is always, and, owing to the limitations of human knowledge, there must always be, wide scope left for possible alternatives. There may be a number of different tools or methods or materials which will serve the purpose, so far as we can see, equally well. For the purpose is definite and limited, and the tools, methods, and materials proposed to be used are only partially relevant to it. For instance, your purpose may involve the provision of a support for a given weight. The structure erected will necessarily possess a certain shape and colour, and the different materials suggested will no doubt differ in their possibilities of shape and colour; but these differences will be irrelevant to your purpose, so far as it involves only the provision of an efficient support. Thus the indifferent, the equally good or serviceable, is not eliminated, with the inevitable result that the process regarded as a whole lacks real unity and cohesion.

The same defect is seen perhaps even more clearly if we consider the practical or purposive use of language for conveying necessary information. There are many ways of saying anything which "from a practical point of view," as we say, are equally effective; as purposive beings, we perceive our vocabulary to be full of synonyms. The practical man does not stop to pick and choose his words; he finds words which will do. (Of course there is no purely practical man; every man is something of an artist, but in any pressing emergency, in which something has to be said at once, we are all flung back to the purely purposive level.) But this collection of words which will "do" has nothing to



recommend it except the purpose for which it will "do." It remains in loose and accidental relation to the purpose which it serves, as a mere means to it. Now the artist destroys the mere means, abolishes the indifferent or equally good, and in so doing makes of the whole complex of means and end for the first time a real organic unity. Art endows the despised means, the tools of purpose, with a significance of their own. It necessarily refuses to recognise any irrelevancy whatever; it insists that everything that enters into the process at any stage must justify itself completely on every side of its being. Every scrap of material used must be completely used up. This is, of course, an ideal which is not actually anywhere fully achieved, because nothing is perfect and art cannot fully satisfy its own demands; but one can see the tendency powerfully at work as art enters into and dominates the purposes of men. Thus for the artist in words there are no synonyms. The poet asks his reader to concede, not just that this word or phrase will do, but that it alone will do. The words have ceased to be the mere slaves of purpose. They remain its servants, but make good their right, as words, to consideration.

So far as art masters the purpose on which it supervenes, it makes each smallest detail of the execution significant; it provides a reason of its own for every choice left open by the purpose or theme. The reason, of course, cannot be expounded in argument. It is impossible to prove that a word or phrase is artistically necessary. It will, however, be recognised as appropriate and significant by any reader who makes effective contact with the mind of the author, and it will be perceived or felt as necessary



in proportion as he recognises finality and perfection in the work.

This involves, further and lastly, the consequence that the transformation effected by the artistic interest is nothing less than the achievement of individuality. What purpose aims at is and must be defined in general terms; what purpose achieves is no doubt a particular state or fact, but this is justified not in its detail and particularity, but by its general conformity to the project outlined in advance. Art has no aim of its own, and any advance sketch it may put out of a projected achievement is a sketch, not a plan, and contributes nothing whatever to the evidence by which the finished work is to be judged. The achievement is the process and its product, significant in all its detail, organically united and containing its justification within itself.

4

It remains for me to make good my challenge in the field of morality.

In the case of art I have tried to show (1) that the concrete artistic act is purposive in character, though not *merely* purposive; (2) that the supervening artistic interest is not purposive in character, not another and a higher purpose, but parasitic on or complementary to a purpose on which it supervenes; (3) that in certain definable ways art confers on the purposive process into which it enters a fuller being and significance. I have now to urge that all these three things can be said equally of the moral act and the moral interest. With the first two points I do not propose to detain you long, not because I wish to



suggest that they are beyond controversy, but because the sense in which I understand them is, I trust, sufficiently evident from what I have already said about art. The point that needs explanation most is the third, because that demands a definition of the nature of the contribution made by morality, which has to be distinguished not only from purpose, but also from art.

Purposive action may be said generally to be directed to the improvement of a situation. An intended action is intended to make things better; not necessarily better absolutely, but relatively better, *i.e.* such action is justified only if the situation is the better for its having occurred. Under the term "situation" must be included anything and everything that is or may be altered by action, including such features of the agent himself. Purposive action, then, is the attempted bettering or amendment of a situation in the sense explained. Now, when the action involves what is called a moral decision, or the solution of a moral problem, it does not cease to be this; it remains purposive and must still abide judgment by results. That corresponds to my first point concerning art. Secondly, the moral contribution is not a new and further purpose. Morality does not ask us to improve situations in ways either contrary or supplementary to those which the non-moral purposive intelligence contemplates. Morality offers no new road to Utopia, nor is there any specifically moral result at which, as moral beings, men are required to aim.

I pass to the third and most difficult point – to the question, What is the nature of the distinctive contribution made by morality to purposive action?



A formal point of some importance needs to be made at once. Morality, like art, enters into action as an additional principle of discrimination; it makes distinctions of value which without it would not be made. But we have already said that it does not override or supersede the discriminations effected by purpose. If this is right, then it follows inevitably that the field of morality, like the field of art, is the area left indeterminate by the abstractions of purpose; that morality, like art, must operate by giving significance to detail which without it is insignificant, by setting a differential value on features which to purpose were indifferent or equal in value. Here arises a difficulty as to the relation with art. Purpose proposed an end and construed all else with sole reference to it; art brought the means to life and made them justify themselves. What room is left, then, for morality? Means and end between them exhaust the act, and that which is individual is a whole. If there is room for morality we know where its operation is to be looked for; but have we left room for it?

Let us now take a simple instance of moral discrimination. Suppose one rejects a possible way of making money on moral grounds. This will not mean that one gives up the purpose of making money where one decently can; it will not mean that any error has been made in the calculation on which the expectation of profit was based; it will not mean that one has thought of another and a better way of making money. Let us suppose the purpose firm, the calculation correct, and the prospect of gain more assured and more brilliant by far than that of any discoverable alternative. I suppose it will be agreed



that it may still be rejected on moral grounds. How is one to describe that rejection or state those grounds? It is difficult to get beyond the simple formula that one recoils from the thought of so acting in the given situation. This recoil or repulsion is not the opposite or contradictory of the former attraction. Nothing envisaged in the merely purposive attitude as actual or probable is now disowned. All that is admitted and remains in view. But something new plainly has been seen which accounts for the change of mind. What is it? To the merely practical or purposive man, say a partner, who has followed you through your calculations and understands the projected coup in all its bearings, your rejection will seem madness, something wholly irrational, a blind subservience perhaps to ancient superstition or old-fashioned business convention, or a lazy, good-tempered acquiescence in wholly arbitrary and artificial limitations upon enterprise. The moral contribution seems to be a mere negation. At a certain point, without rhyme or reason, it makes a man see a barrier he cannot pass; he can only say that he does not consider himself free to improve the situation in just that way.

I know that there are many who will tell me that my difficulty is imaginary; that there is a moral aim and purpose, which is the ultimate overriding purpose of life; that this man, who rejects a safe and legally admissible means of enriching himself, rejects it because he is after something more important than that, with which in the given circumstances that conflicts. He is seeking, they will perhaps say, his own spiritual development and perfection. To which I might reply that the act



must first be shown to be right now before it can be relied upon to build up righteousness in the future; and – more relevantly to our present enquiry – that there may well be such an aim, and it may well be considered more important than riches, but that it is after all only an end, like any other, a possible result of action, and that it falls, with all other ends, under the inflexible moral rule that it may not be pursued by any and every means. Morality may call on a man at any moment to surrender the most promising avenue to his own moral perfection.

I return, then, to my difficulty. This impatience of the practical man with the curtailment of his activities inflicted by the intrusion of the scruples of morality has some parallel in the field of art. The artistic conscience also is apt to make itself a nuisance to the practical man. In the name of art also he finds himself adjured to choose the more troublesome and costly method where the easier and less costly would do as well. The parallel is encouraging, because it suggests that we are right in supposing some similarity between art and morality in their relation to purpose. But the parallel seems incomplete, if only for the reason that art has quite evidently its positive triumphs – triumphs which rich men will pay large sums of money to get into their possession, while those of morality are hard to find, and certainly are not bid for by millionaires.

Yet I cannot help thinking that a solution of the problem which will eventually lay this ghost is not so very far off. We have only to ask the simple question, What is the subject of the moral judgment? To this question all human experience and all



reflection upon it gives one unanimous answer — Action. Action and conduct, and the human will as manifested in these, provide the field of moral discrimination. A result is not praised or blamed. The things and methods used in effecting it are not morally good or bad. Praise and blame and the predicates importing moral value are reserved for action itself, *i.e.* for the human will which by given means seeks a given end. Purpose, of course, when fully developed and expressed, is action, and the embroidery of art, if incidental to purpose, is incidental to action; but “action” none the less is a term foreign to the vocabulary equally of art and of purpose.

The utilitarian, who is the practical man turned philosopher, may actually use this word, but he would have to surrender his doctrine if he meant by it what he ought to mean. What he means by action is only a particular type of result, a result which is conditioned by conscious human activity. He cannot get away from results, for results carry the only independent value which he recognises. Morality, however, like art, cares nothing for results. To morality it does not matter what the results may be, so long as they are practically acceptable. The future result must be transformed into the present intention before it will enter into the notion of action as judged good or bad. A comparison between the moral judgment and the judgment of practical utility verifies this immediately. In the purposive attitude the emphasis is on results. Therefore the practical man must wait and see; his method is that of trial and error; his judgments must be tentative, qualified with cautious reservations for what the



future may bring: in the nature of the case, he can give no last and final word. The moral value, on the other hand, is in the action itself, and the moral discrimination is absolute and decisive. The moralist gives from moment to moment a judgment which is final and irreversible. Justice is not altered though the heavens fall.

It is after all a plain fact that any process carried out by human muscles under the direction of human intelligence is a partial expression of the nature of the agent and of the relation in which he conceives himself to stand to other persons and to the rest of the world in which he lives. In such a process purpose sees only the result and all else in terms of it as means: the energy spent will be wasted unless it brings in a proportionate return. Art glorifies the means, brings them to life, and thereby also makes the expenditure of energy self-justifying. Art thus binds the process into a real unity and individuality. But art remains preoccupied with the external; of the mind and will operating in the process it takes no account.

*Demand of lilies wherefore they are white:  
Extort her crimson secret of the rose:  
But ask not of the Muse that she disclose  
The meaning of the riddle of her might.  
Somewhat of all things sealed and recondite,  
Save the enigma of herself, she knows.<sup>1</sup>*

Morality, supervening upon purpose and art, completes the development by replacing this central fact at the centre.

Thus the progress from purpose through art to

<sup>1</sup> W. Watson, *Lachrymae Musarum*.



morality is at bottom a progress to a more concrete grasp of fact. The corrections and refinements induced upon purpose by these two intruders are in principle simply the corrections necessary upon a fuller and truer view of the situation. The apparent negativeness of the moral contribution is due to the fact that the human will, as moral, is engaged for the most part in merely re-affirming itself. In the concrete moral act the purposive-artistic complex is absorbed and transformed, as purpose was absorbed and transformed by art; and with this last transformation the development of the practical attitude is completed. There can be no further judgment in which this last is absorbed, for the whole fact is now present to consciousness. What came first was action, and, as such, amenable to moral judgments; but it was action that did not know itself as action, and consequently did not judge itself. But in the last stage, mediated by the intervention of art, we have action fully conscious of itself and self-justified. The moral will is the self-conscious will, satisfied and dissatisfied with itself.

I called my subject the Limits of Purpose, and I claim that the phrase is justified, since purpose alone will not give us art or morality. I have spoken also of the supersession of purpose; and purpose is superseded so far as art and morality, when they enter in, take charge and have the last word. But the reader may, if he wishes, call it the completion of purpose, so long as he admits that purpose is brought to completion by something not itself.



## II

### DESIRE AND AFFECTION <sup>1</sup>

#### 1. *Desire and Thought*

THE simplest analysis of human action shows desire and thought co-operating in it, involved in a kind of circle, each determining the other.

Some germ of thought and knowledge must be involved in even the lowliest response to which the name "action" is applicable. To the extent to which a creature can think and know, it can act. At its lowest, action appears to be a response to something observed. The observed may be called generally the situation; it is this that is thought about, that the creature seeks to know. We can then say, without injustice to common-sense psychology, that the range of action depends on the fullness with which the situation is grasped and understood. This means that thought and knowledge control and limit action. Thus we have one of the two relations which go to form the circle.

But it appears to be equally true that thought and knowledge are limited, though not in precisely the same way, by desire. Without desire, we suppose, that self-initiated movement which is characteristic of life would be wholly impossible. In fact, men and animals appear to be so made that they are predisposed at any moment to action on certain lines, lines laid down in general for all by nature,

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1929.



but specialised and modified in each individual by use and practice. Desire and instinct are the two chief heads under which these predeterminations are brought. We need not consider the relation of these two terms to one another; for common sense supposes that any predisposition that affects action affects it in the form of desire. Thus the single term desire suffices.

Now a desire, considered as operative in conduct, is essentially a selective response coupled with a selective perception. It does not matter whether what is called desire is a universal feature of animal life, like the desire to eat, or a highly specialised and developed interest, like the collector's passion for old china. Hunger not only makes a man behave in a certain way to food when he sees it; it also leads him to see it. A predisposition to act on certain lines is also a predisposition to see certain aspects of a situation more readily and prominently than the rest. The knowledge sought is sought as the condition of effective action; and the main lines of action are predetermined by desire. Desire stimulates to thinking, but also limits it.

In this way the circle is completed. Thought and desire are involved in reciprocal control and limitation. But the circle is not a closed circle. These principles, it seems, vary also independently of one another, and thus the circle is capable of enlargement.

Circumstances *force* things upon our notice, and the relevant comes to us richly contaminated with irrelevancies. From this surplus material, by slow and gradual stages the field of desire and action will be enlarged and enriched. And even if desire were



completely in control of thought, in the sense that it settled always and without fail what elements in a situation should receive attention, there would still remain unsettled the question of the creature's capacity to explore the implications of the elements registered. The clues secured may be followed to any distance. Thought may to a less or greater degree interpret the present in the light of the past and as the germ of the future. The more it does so, the more extensive will be the field of action revealed, even within the limits of relevance established by desire. (There may, of course, be a compensating loss here. The diminution of the tyranny of the present, as such, may involve a diminished range and intensity of registration. But this is difficult to prove, and in any case the loss would be fully cancelled by the extension of the range of action which this enrichment of the present brings with it.) In these ways at least, if in no others, the power of thought shows in its development a certain independence of its master, desire.

At least as high a degree of independence must be claimed for desire in relation to the admitted mastery of thought. It must be remembered that when we set desire in opposition to thought as an independent principle co-operating with it, as popular psychology does, we must necessarily regard desire as unthinking or unconscious. Common language most often applies the term "desire" to a state in which the subject of desire is conscious of what he is seeking and of the means by which it might be got. Such states are obviously conditioned by the limits of thought and knowledge. In them the conception of something as desirable is at work.



But the desiring creature, considered simply as desirous, with no additional complication, is to be taken as not conscious of anything as desirable. It is desire in this simple sense that makes cattle attend to their fodder and eat it, without any consciousness, as we suppose, of what they are doing or why. Equally it is desire in this sense which makes a young man at a certain age begin to observe the feminine as such and find that factor in presented situations interesting: he need not know or think why. This last instance shows how desire may vary independently of thought and carry thought with it in its variation. By every such variation the field of action is enriched and complicated.

The circle, then, is not a closed circle. The mutually involved factors are capable to some extent of independent variation.

These two principles then, Desire and Thought, evolve together in complicated interaction on the background of human history. This is no account of mind in evolution, and the subtleties are beyond us. But let us try to seize a critical point. At some point in this long history the mind of man in its backward and forward look achieves a view of itself. It is now aware not merely of the food which it eats, but of itself as aware of the food and predisposed to grasp and eat it. It is aware for the first time of the food as food. By this step life is much complicated and altered. Thought in its first form, the form in which it was postulated as a condition of anything that deserved the name "action," was no more practical than theoretical. It was the purposeless registration of a situation on lines prejudiced, no doubt, but unconsciously prejudiced, by the



demands of the organism. The new consciousness of these demands makes a revolution and marks the beginning of practical thought. Such concepts as desire and desirable begin to appear. It is only when a living creature becomes aware of his various desires as desires and begins to notice how precarious their satisfaction is, that he finds himself face to face with a practical problem in the foreseen danger of disappointment and the pressing need of co-ordination. Reflection on this problem will naturally bring to birth by degrees such notions as interest, welfare, pleasure, happiness, under which the desires and their objects are correlated. Meanwhile, side by side with this development of practical thought, a parallel movement brings to birth by degrees out of the many unrelated desires the single sovereign will. It is a will which presupposes the desires and is directed generally to their satisfaction. The evidence for its existence is the same in principle as the evidence for the existence of a desire. The proof of the existence of a desire for food is the action of eating. Similarly, when we see a man refrain from eating when hungry, we have to postulate an overmastering desire which enables him to refrain. Another desire of the same order, say, a desire for drink, will not serve our purpose, since the attitude of the man who refuses food is one in which the desire for food is recognised and accepted as legitimate. We suppose then that there is a desire of a higher level, a desire for the truly desirable, which informs will and conditions purpose. Purpose is the characteristic expression of will as sovereign over primitive desire. The immediacy of desire, "leaping to its prey" (to quote an eighteenth-century



phrase) "like a tiger chained by cobwebs," is replaced by a mediation, which distinguishes the means from the end and generalises desire under the notion of good.

In mind at this stage appears for the first time that state or activity which we most commonly intend when we speak of desire as present in a person. By the word "desire" we commonly mean a felt tension between a present situation, recognised as in some way defective, and the brighter possibilities which it suggests. Actually such an attitude, thanks to the development of thought and will, is compatible with the complete dormancy of desire in the sense in which I first used the word. A man full-fed and wholly devoid of hunger may be scheming for a better food supply and struggling with all his might to secure it. Creatures that live on more concentrated food than grass are only intermittently hungry; but their endowment of thought and will enables them to give their whole day, if they please, to the enrichment of their table. Hunger is for the animals: it is their privilege to be greedy. Greed presupposes hunger and is essentially the determination to make the most of the opportunities which hunger offers. If the word may be extended, as it often is in common speech, to cover all the senses and the desires connected with them, greed will serve as a general descriptive name for the organising principle of life at this level. The activities of such a life will take more and less reputable forms, varying with the more and less fastidious taste of the individual: they will cover themselves in any case with respectable and even exalted names, as incidents in the pursuit of happiness or



well-being, of self-realisation or self-development; but in principle greed will remain an appropriate general description. For the unifying principle is nothing but the calculated effort at a systematic exploitation of the desires, with a view to getting the maximum return from them. The conception of an ultimate end, whether called by the name of happiness or by any other name, is a delusion if it is supposed that this will serve to define the maximum. Limits are set no doubt in a favourable case to the exploitation of a given desire, but only in a rough and ready fashion, by trial and error, according to the felt operation of the principle of diminishing returns.

As desire becomes rationalised and self-conscious by the governing power of thought, it reveals itself as an interest in a certain kind of object. We come to call objects which eaten will satisfy hunger, "food," and objects which drunk will satisfy thirst, "drink." These names, "food" and "drink," are not simply general names for things which are interesting as individuals, as the name "wife" and "mother" apply to innumerable cases in each of which a uniquely situated individual receives the name. The wife or mother, good or bad, is an individual significant by her individuality. This is not the case with the object of desire. For desire what is significant is the general character which enables a given individual to provide the appropriate satisfaction, the eatability of the roll of bread, the drinkability of the glass of wine. The object of desire is the mere vehicle of a motion which ends in the organism in which it begins. This means that any individual object offered for use in the satisfaction of desire



may be replaced without loss or disturbance by some other individual object possessing the same general character. Discrimination between one instance and another is at most a matter of degree: this is more eatable or drinkable than that. The impulse at once fastens, without remorse or regret, on that which is placed higher in the scale. Desire is essentially transferable or vagrant as between individuals of the appropriate kind, and its valuations are necessarily relative.

It follows that the type of thought which is stimulated by desire and characteristic of a life organised in the service of desire is abstract and general, attentive not to the particulars themselves, but to them in respect only of certain general characters which they may exhibit. But desire is generally supposed to be as old as human life; and it would seem to follow that the general term and the class-concept are as old as human thought. This would involve us in conflict with the view often expressed by Locke and other empirical philosophers that ideas of particular things come first and general ideas are somehow manufactured out of them. But we need not fear this conflict. There was a similar delusion in the realm of politics that the free individual came first and the ordered state came after, as a necessary and effective, but still regrettable, abridgment of his liberty. So here general ideas were a necessary and valuable economy. History and anthropology have now finally discredited this political myth, and the same solvents may be asked to do their work here. The study of history and the comparison of different levels of culture show conclusively that the grasp of the



individual is not the starting-point but the goal of thought's journey.

To return then to desire. The thought of a desirous creature is on this primitive level of general terms and class-concepts, for which individuality – all that makes a person or thing the irreplaceable entity that it actually is – is either non-existent or irrelevant. In general it will be recognised that things have their differences and peculiarities; but in the operations of desire these will appear only as a surd or remainder. The attitude in its purest form is well exemplified when one of us to-day goes shopping among standardised manufactured articles, to buy a mowing-machine or a motor car. By previous discussion in general terms, assisted by experience of instances of the various “makes,” we can, if we are sufficiently strong-minded, decide exactly what we want; and any special peculiarities in what we get are more likely to be a ground of complaint than a source of additional satisfaction. And when we get home, if we are asked what we have done, we say we have bought *a* Ransome or *a* Morris. This is characteristic of practical thought which, concentrated on general ends, such as wealth, pleasure or happiness, remains irretrievably abstract and general in its attitude to the things and persons which it uses. So far as man is merely practical, or if practical means no more than this, the individual as such has no interest for him whatever.

If this were a complete account of human nature the world would be a very different place from what it actually is. If desire and its service were the whole of life there would be no fondness for places and buildings, no contemplative enjoyment of sights



and sounds, no ties of affection and friendship, but only the continual grasping calculation of something to be got from men and things as they served a more or less transient need. The convenience of a utensil would be the highest form of praise. Hobbes has already described this state and called it "the Natural Condition of Mankind." "No Arts, no Letters, no Society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death." It would be a life "solitary" for certain: whether also "poor, nasty, brutish, and short" might depend partly on circumstances.

## *2. Affection and Thought*

But of course desire is not the whole of life. In man's mind, even at its most primitive, there is another principle at work, a principle which counteracts the fierce abstractions of desire and contains the germ of a more adequate grasp of reality. The materials which the senses furnish are in fact submitted to other developments, in which individuality is not sacrificed but remains central. And it is on this principle, in the last resort, that all the higher developments of human nature depend.

It is easy enough, even at the lowest levels of life, to point to phenomena for which desire does not account, which must therefore be supposed to be manifestations of another principle; and on analysis these phenomena show a precisely opposite tendency which makes this rival principle the fit complement of desire. This principle I will call affection, using the word in the current sense, as the substantive corresponding to the adjective



“affectionate.” It is to be seen at work, I suggest, in any act or activity for which a particular thing or person has its own peculiar significance and is irreplaceable by another particular of the same kind. Its application must not be confined to persons, though in personal relations it finds no doubt its fullest and most characteristic expression. Inanimate things also commonly acquire a value of their own; they come to be incorporated into a man’s life as intimate ingredients of it, endlessly provocative of fruitful activity. A town or a countryside, a house and garden, a familiar street, a favourite chair or pen – these and other such particular things acquire for a particular individual a uniquely stimulating character, which is quite independent of any comparison with other individuals of the same general type, and makes them strictly irreplaceable. This is the true intimate meaning of property, that natural property to which the French Revolution declared man’s inalienable right – things that are one’s own as one’s self is one’s own. The relation is merely enriched and further complicated when the object of affection is a living being, capable of answering activity by activity and affection by affection. Neither love nor hatred can be reduced to manifestations of desire; and, though desire here also plays its part, the more positive values of family life and of social life generally depend mainly without doubt on personal affection. And indeed it seems evident that character and personality are so dependent on this principle of affection, that if we suppose it lacking or wholly unsatisfied, they would not exist, and if we suppose it weakened they are weakened with it. Mere desire is as ruthless and



impersonal as an earthquake or any other overwhelming natural force.

Thought, which is the creature of human interest, responds to affection as it responded to desire. In obedience to desire, as we saw, it abstracts and generalises. In response to affection thought dwells on each observed particular, grouping and uniting them, not by classification, as they exemplify certain types, but by the principle of individuality, so that they are seen to build up a relatively independent and self-contained system, which retains in some sense a single character through all its successive phases. Nothing is omitted or discounted, but some features are felt as more characteristic than others; as in all systems, there is subordination, which gives ample opportunity for doubts and hesitations, as for differences of interpretation. If the observer will think individually at all, he must needs frame his own hypothesis, form his own view of the character observed; and this will be done by forcing a certain emphasis and rhythm upon the various appearances. His hypothesis will be continuously tested in its continuous effort to digest the appearances; it will insensibly modify and correct itself, deepen and enrich itself, as time goes on. There will not as a rule be any startling changes or turning points in this development. A man's growing knowledge of his friend or of his country does not proceed by revolutionary discoveries – such surprises as occur are apt to seem much less surprising in retrospect – but cumulatively, by constant watchfulness and unending readiness to learn more. It is an account which in the nature of the case must never be considered closed, and there can be no



finality of judgment. Progress is marked only by gradually increasing understanding, by greater confidence in interpretation and prediction; but doubt is never quite excluded, and an absolute of "knowledge" is not even conceivable.

It seems also to be the case that in the attitude of affection the observer's own position and his relation to the observed belong to the fundamental data of thought, as they do not when thought is actualised by desire. This may look like a paradox, since the desirous act is very naturally described as an act in which the agent takes something for himself, and the typical act of affection is apt to be thought of as one in which the agent gives something away. But the direct opposition already formulated between the concreteness of the one attitude and the abstractness of the other will be readily seen to entail this as a consequence. In the act of desire a *hungry person* seeks *food*; names and personalities are of as little importance on the one side as on the other. Indeed to name or otherwise individualise the thing eaten would be to make it repulsive and almost impossible to eat. The act would approximate at once to cannibalism. And you cannot thus denature one term in a relation and leave the other unaffected. Common sense may say that John Smith is eating his dinner; but it is not really John Smith that eats, and the food that will presently go to form his body is not really his. But into the relations established by affection he enters whole and entire with all his peculiarities of status and character. The things and persons bound to him by affection – his home, his wife and children, his friends, his country – these are really his. The whole series of relations depends



essentially on his unique position in the scheme of things, and constitute, if not his personality, at least what we may call, by misusing a legal term, his personality. The principle of affection creates relations of individuals in respect of their individuality. If desire makes man a vagrant and a spendthrift, by his affections he is a miser and a stay-at-home.

Since both principles are continuously and simultaneously operative in human nature, it is very natural that they should be often confused and mistaken for one another. Desire is in fact commonly complicated by the intrusion of affection, and affection similarly by that of desire. In action of any considerable degree of elaboration it will usually be difficult to distinguish precisely the part played by each principle. The instances of the tie of affection already given provide ample illustration of the contamination of affection by desire. The intimate personal tie of property for instance comes to be confused with, or even completely absorbed in, the wholly impersonal desirous category of wealth. It is then reckoned in terms of money, which is the mere abstract potentiality of possession, and, by reason of its absolute transferability and its complete indifference to individuals in every sense, has been rightly taken, since the days of Plato, as the most perfect symbol of generalised desire. Similarly, the natural and proper attachment of each of us to the place where he was born and brought up, to the familiar uses of his home and kindred, turns into an aggressive assertion of the superiority of these to others, expressed in action as the attempt to enrich and aggrandise these at the expense of others. This conversion is so common and superficially at least



so complete, that many thinkers argue that there is nothing in patriotism but competitive desire. But the most inexhaustible field for the mixture and confusion of these principles in fact, fancy, and fiction is the relation between men and women. Here the cynic sees nothing but desire and the romantic only affection. The ideal of marriage requires the operation of both principles, desire being confined and canalised by affection.

In all these three cases – property, patriotism, and the intimacy of the sexes – there have been found purists who have condemned the whole relation, as the sign or source of the corruption of human nature. But however different they may be in many other respects, they are all alike in this, that they all spring from normal and ineradicable human tendencies, and each in its development becomes a field of battle on which the two principles we are discussing fight it out together. In this struggle they become confused. Love and lust, property and wealth, loyalty and jingoism, intermingle in fact and in men's thoughts; and the condemnation of the perversion is allowed to discredit the whole relation. But however intricate the interplay of the two principles may be, surely all these situations are much elucidated when it is recognised that in each there are these two opposed and independent tendencies at issue, producing in their conflict fundamental problems of human life and society.

My point then is that, however far back we go into the origins of man, and however far forward we follow his development, we shall never be able to give a credible explanation of his behaviour by means of the single principle of desire, even if we



lend it the assistance of its child, purpose. We shall always need at least one other principle. And I have argued that the field is in general covered if we supplement desire by affection; if, as complement to the attitude in which things are significant only in their general character, we recognise an attitude in which things are individually significant. If unregulated human intercourse is more decent and tolerable than Hobbes suggested, that is because he wilfully and paradoxically composed his man of desire alone; the same passion, he said, was called desire when its object was absent and love when it was present. We have only to introduce affection into the picture – *i.e.* to insist that love is different in kind from desire – to set some limit to competition and bring some order into social relations. For affection makes each man and home and place an individual centre different from every other, and when thus fixed by affection they are in certain important respects removed from competition. The basis of order, and so ultimately of justice, is that things and persons should have each its assured place.

### *3. Illustrations*

I will now try to indicate shortly some applications of which the theme I have been developing seems to admit.

It is commonly said – and surely with evident truth – that a man's knowledge of persons depends on the width and depth of his affections more than on anything else. The truth of this is only seen the more clearly if some necessary qualifications



and explanations are added. There is a knowledge of persons which does not depend on affection – such a knowledge as might be shown by a rather inhuman despot, by a military officer or sergeant-major, by the foreman or manager of a great business, in whose hands a multitude of appointments lay. Such a ruler or official might show great knowledge of men in the sense that he had an unerring instinct for putting the square peg in the square hole and the round peg in the round hole; he might be an expert in finding the job for the man; and he might yet have little interest in the men as individuals and little knowledge of them in that sense. The thought implicit in his particular decisions would be a thought which arranged men in classes and allowed complete interchangeability within each class, in the fashion characteristic, as we have seen, of thought when employed in the service of desire. Knowledge of men, when credited to public officials, often means no more than this; and if so, clearly it is no proof of affection. But if by knowledge of persons is meant a real understanding of their thoughts and actions, so that wishes can be anticipated and unexpressed intentions carried out; if in short is meant contact with individuals in their individuality, then it seems that affection is the only key. Not that affection suffices by itself. Clearly it does not; but, in proportion as affection is lacking, judgment is insecure and uncertain.

This principle may have no clear application in the field of science, which is a world, as we know, of classes and abstractions, but it has very obvious applications in history and biography, which, however scientific they may claim to be, are yet obliged



by their very nature to attempt a vision of the individuality of an individual object. It is evident that the work of a historian demands a width of sympathy and imagination of which few men are capable; and perhaps if any historian ever succeeds in showing that he has not set himself an impossible task, it is because knowledge tends to increase and expand the affection which made it possible. And, of course, most so-called historical writing is not history, but only a memorandum of data for a history that may one day be written. Similarly a real biography, in which life is more than a mere word, is the rarest of things, and the few examples are, like Boswell's Johnson, obviously tributes of affection.

The importance of affection is quite as fundamental in the field of æsthetic appreciation. In art and literature we all have our likes and dislikes; and much confusion arises from our attempts to justify these by the principles of the art in question. These judgments are often more complicated than they appear to be, and genuinely æsthetic elements may be contained in them; but in general a dislike signifies failure to make effective contact and constitutes a disqualification for judging. It is at least doubtful whether an honest critic should speak at all except where his affections are engaged; but here, as in history and biography, there are formal and external relations which can be established by mere honest observation and analysis. That such analysis, necessarily conducted in general terms, results in a mere classification, and not in an understanding of the work in its individuality is, I think, obvious. It does not follow that the analysis is not



worth making, nor even that it may not contribute something to the æsthetic appreciation which is the understanding of the work in its individuality. What I am saying is that this appreciation, unlike the analysis, is impossible without affection or liking; and I suggest that this fact explains the fundamental difficulty which confronts the composer of any general history of art or literature. The limits of the possible extension of the affections are soon reached; and therefore the historian of art, unless his mind be of heroic cast, must either operate within a very narrow range or confine his work for most of its course to the scientific and classificatory plane.

In morality the importance of affection will probably be readily conceded. It will be agreed that the right attitude to other persons within the scope of one's action is to treat them as persons, as existing in their own right, rather than as instruments of desire or as particular instances of a class (child, shopkeeper, servant, etc.). That is the sense of Kant's injunction to treat persons as ends in themselves, not merely as means. It will also be agreed that affection creates this attitude to persons. But since we are by no means free to choose with whom we shall associate, a difficulty arises here, which Kant points out. "Affection," he says, "cannot be commanded." Therefore when we are told to love our neighbour, and even our enemy, we must suppose love "practical" and not love "pathological" – a will, not an emotion – to be intended. Kant's phrase, "a love seated in the will, not in the bias of sentiment," may seem a mere evasion of the difficulty, since it may well be doubted whether the



strongest will can extract from a temperamental aversion the fruits of genuine affection. But the difficulty must be put aside here, with the reminder that we have not asserted, and do not wish to assert, that in any sphere affection by itself suffices, only that it supplies the indispensable foundation.

Finally, since philosophy cannot rest content with a conception of knowledge which excludes the individual altogether, as that of science does, it seems that affection must be said to be essential also to knowledge. If we do not wish reality to become an ultimate abstraction, a sort of class of classes, we must suppose that it is within the power of metaphysics to restore individuality to its place in the final account, and in so doing to justify as knowledge the grasp of the changing situation by which man lives, as well as those offshoots from it which are given over to the specialists – not merely the abstractions of man's science and mathematics, but also his achievements or aspirations in history and biography, in art and literature, in religion, in the knowledge of particular men and things and places. The attribution of omniscience to God is common in religious writing; but there is one text that has impressed itself upon men's imagination beyond all others: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." The text owes its special appeal to the fact that it suggests at the same time infinite knowledge and infinite love.

The general thesis of the paper is that, if human behaviour is seen as due to the interaction of thought



and desire, a one-sided and incorrect picture necessarily results, because desire accounts only for an interest in a certain *kind* of thing and excludes direct interest in individuals. It is argued that a supplementary principle, called affection, must be invoked to account for interest in individuals, and that this principle is a fundamental condition of all man's higher activities.

Such terms as desire, thought, affection, are abstractions, and are inevitably to some extent arbitrary. They are devices by which reflective analysis tries to reduce to order the complicated phenomena of conduct. No finality should ever be claimed for any such classification. Probably the phenomena are best understood if they are analysed in as many different ways as possible. But it is necessary to demand that a classification shall give some guarantee of its own completeness; and in this respect there is room for legitimate objection to many classifications of popular and professional psychology. Nothing turns in this paper on the question whether what I have called "thought" and "desire" (keeping as near as possible to popular usage) are products of the best or most convenient division. It suffices that these, or related, terms are in common use. What I suggest is that if these abstractions are made, they must be supplemented by a third which I call affection.

The thesis then is that the behaviour of a man, his total activity or occupation in any moment of being, cannot be truthfully expressed by means of the terms "desire" and "thought" alone, but can be truthfully expressed by means of the trio, desire – affection – thought.



This means that in man, as accounting for his behaviour, we are asked to postulate at any moment:

(1) A predisposition to action called desire – *i.e.* a readiness to undertake elaborate series of movements, which, however much they may differ in detail, conform to a general type in their result and in their relation to the normal processes of the human organism.

(2) A capacity to take in the general features of the situation, including ultimately the desire itself. This capacity may be called generally Thought.

(3) The third factor which I wish to introduce is to be supposed so far to be on the same plane with desire, that it, like desire, is a precondition of thought. It stimulates, guides, and limits thought as desire does; and primitive thought will be wholly unaware of this control by affection just as it is unaware of its control by desire. More highly developed thought will discover these limitations and will be able partly, though never wholly, to overcome them. Thus affection is a predisposition, like desire.

Unlike the fundamental desires (instincts), however, it is not a predisposition common to the species, but one personal to the individual. It ties him to *his* parents, friends, home, etc., which are only shared by accident with others. Again, while each appetite has its organs with biologically fixed uses, affection has no organ and no specific mode of action. It is wholly unspecialised in its expression. The elements in behaviour which are characteristic of the affectionate person in relation to the object of affection are such as these: the attempt to be with the object as much as possible; the tendency to give action



continual reference to the object, especially to help and not hinder it, to improve and look after it, and so on.

Here is an instance. A little girl of my acquaintance (aged six) acquired a bicycle by gift from another little girl who had outgrown it. When she knew that she was to have it, but before it came, she addressed to this bicycle these lines:

*O beautiful bike, I love you so:*

*It is so nice to see you go.*

*I will wash you and clean you and take  
you home –*

*O beautiful bike, will you come?*

In the background, no doubt, was the desire for a bicycle. If this gift had fallen through, another ideal bicycle would very likely have taken its place. But the poem breathes pure affection – the delight in contemplating the characteristic motions of the beloved object, the care for it, the absorption in the life of the lover. The prey has become the charge: desire has been domesticated by affection.



### III

#### MORAL VALUES <sup>1</sup>

##### I

A STUDY of moral values is a study of the values relevant to character and conduct. Since conduct consists of actions (including refusals to act) and character is exhibited in and inferred from actions, the phrase "values relevant to actions" would perhaps suffice. The term "values" needs little amplification. But it is necessary to observe that there are on the face of it two sets of values relevant to actions, namely, (1) those which actions themselves possess, so that we differentiate them as good and bad actions – a differentiation which may be made by a spectator in regard to a process in which he himself takes no part; (2) those asserted implicitly by an agent in his action considered as an interference with the course of events. In the most obvious and typical cases this second set of values attach themselves, not to actions, but to the environment of action as modifiable by it; in particular, to states or events which action may help to maintain or bring about. Thus the act of tidying a room implies a preference under the given circumstances for a tidy rather than an untidy room. Whether, and if so in what sense, a value of the first class, *i.e.* the goodness or badness of an action, can serve as a value of the second class, *i.e.* as a determinant of intelligent choice or purpose, is a disputed

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, July, 1929.



question. Clearly a human being, in virtue of his self-consciousness, is able to become the spectator of himself; and before engaging in action, or while engaged upon it, he may ask himself how the action itself should be valued or judged. He thus becomes the judge in imagination of himself, and it seems natural to suppose that the result of this intellectual experiment may be to lead him to modify or discontinue the line of action projected or initiated. If so, the value implied in his discontinuance or modified continuation will be in part at least a value of the first class which determines action and thus serves as a value of the second class.

That such an imaginative self-judgment plays an important, if not essential, part in what we call morality, most moralists, ancient and modern, who are not pure utilitarians or hedonists, have explicitly or implicitly maintained; and I myself am disposed to agree with them in this. Only I do not think it explains quite as much as some of them thought it explained, and I have to admit that there are serious difficulties which can only be circumvented by very cautious and careful statement. The chief difficulty arises from the fact that the essence of action seems to be the valuations implied in it, *i.e.* the main ground for favourable valuation of an action (for asserting value [1]) is full acceptance of the valuations of the second class which the action seems to presuppose in the agent. In more ordinary terms, an action to be reckoned good must exhibit sound preferences. For instance, an action which seems to imply a preference for the unhappiness of others is so far bad, and an action which implies a preference for their happiness is so far good. Now suppose a man finds himself



engaged in a course of action which, if continued (as he discovers by imaginative self-judgment), would be open to the former interpretation, and stigmatised as cruel. Suppose that, on becoming aware of this, he modifies his action, so that it is not open to this interpretation. What has happened? Clearly he will be entitled to escape the blame which attaches to callousness or cruelty; but he does not seem to be entitled to the praise which is accorded to benevolence, *i.e.* the active preference for the happiness of others. It cannot be supposed that the reflection that the projected act would be judged by an impartial spectator to be cruel or callous will of itself create a *direct* motive to an action of opposite tendency. There is therefore no real benevolence in the amended course of action, no preference for the happiness of others in itself. What is operative is a preference for a line of action which will not involve him in self-condemnation.

Though conscience is often said to be the guide of life, its operations (so far as they are investigated at all) are commonly conceived after the foregoing model. "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all." But clearly the conscience which makes men cowards is rather a censor than a guide. Its decrees form a kind of criminal law; it intervenes to deter and punish; and the very nature of its action implies a better state in which it would be reduced to inactivity by the removal of all grounds for interference. In the perfectly healthy will conscience is in abeyance, as the criminal law will disappear from sight in a perfectly healthy community. But if this is so, then either conscience is not of the essence of morality, or there is a goal beyond morality on which morality



depends for its meaning. Classical Greek thought argued cogently that justice cannot be supposed to reside in the action of the judge who directs the restoration of the social order where it has been disturbed; that would make its existence dependent on the presence of defect and disorder; the positive value must lie in the order itself which the action corrected by the judge disturbs. So here, if the action of conscience is correctly typified by the above example, it must surely be conceded that the intervention of conscience derives its value from a further good in whose interest it intervenes; its action is instrumental merely and conditioned by the presence of defect. Or, recurring to the two classes of values, the same point may be put thus: It would seem that the intrusion of values of the first class into the determination of action – *i.e.* their appearance among values of the second class – cannot be of the essence of morality, unless morality is merely a second best. For this intrusion implies in its very nature an ideal in which the values implicit in action are perfectly acceptable to an impartial observer, which means, as we have seen, that values of the first class do not appear among them.

## 2

I propose now to undertake an analysis of action with a view to throwing further light on the problem just stated.

An action is essentially an interference by a person with the course of events, and its implications may be followed in two directions – not in complete independence of one another – into the personality of the agent on the one hand and into the environment



affected on the other. Thus an action may be valued in two ways: (1) in respect of its contribution to the course of events, (2) in respect of the mind or character shown in it. Since events are more directly observable and more easily analysed than characters, the first valuation is the more easily made, and until some progress has been made with it, the second valuation is in fact impossible. But it is incontestable that a valuation of an act in respect of its contribution to the course of events is far from a complete valuation of it. It may be possible under favourable conditions to determine accurately the kind and degree of contribution which a given action – the saying of certain words or the application of remedies to a wound – has made to a known relatively simple issue, *e.g.* the resignation of a minister, the survival of a wounded soldier; but if the whole is really to be interpreted as action, and not as a mere concatenation of movements, it must be seen finally as the activity or self-expression of a human personality. For this purpose the results must be reformulated as intentions, and at once a doubt arises how far the results actually accruing can be taken to correspond with the results anticipated by the agent at the time of the act, perhaps even how far the knowledge available at the time of action would have enabled anyone to foretell the issue. It is therefore a very paradoxical view of the Utilitarians that the valuation of action proceeds (or should proceed) only by reckoning results; but even they admit that there are these two lines of judgment which may give rise to divergent estimates: only they prefer to regard the second kind of valuation as a valuation of the agent rather than of the act, and argue that this valuation of



the agent depends itself ultimately on results, since to call him good is to recognise him as capable of making great contributions to human welfare. It seems clear that a full understanding of action must pursue both sets of implications, and that the distinction between valuation of the agent and valuation of the act cannot in this sense be upheld. It also seems clear that the moral philosopher, in his capacity as moral philosopher, is not occupied in reforming the world, but in trying to understand what moral value is, and therefore that he is not interested in the contribution of action to the course of events for its own sake at all, but only as evidence of the mind and will which the agent expressed in the act. The second valuation is the one in which he is interested, and in the first only incidentally as throwing light upon it.

So far we have adopted the point of view of the spectator of an action, who can follow it in two directions, to its source in the character of the agent and to its issue in the welter of events. If we now adopt the point of view of the agent himself, we shall find a parallel but somewhat modified dualism. He will justify his actions, if they are questioned, mainly in terms of the external series: "this is done in order to make that possible," and so on; but the explanation will depend for its plausibility, at least as often as not, on the fact that the result to which the action leads represents something that the agent likes or desires. Thus the constructive effort which is his action is found to be expressive of desire or liking. He will also observe, if he observes his own behaviour at all closely, an amount of detail in it, which is purely expressive in its character. I do not mean that the movements in question have no effect on



his environment; only that they appear to be made without any reference to their possible effects on it. A man will speak loud because the person he is speaking to is deaf and because he likes to be heard; but he may also speak loud because he is angry, or because it is his habit so to speak. A wounded man will cry out, and his cries may actually bring people to help him; but it was not with that object that he cried. Every one has his tricks of speech and movement which, though they may on occasion be used for certain ends, exist and persist independently of purpose and even to its prejudice. Actions, then, regarded from the point of view of the agent, have a dual character, as expressive on the one hand and constructive on the other. In the one view they are regarded as contributions to the flow of events and as justified by what occurs there; in the other they are seen to be explained, if not justified, by some state or attitude of the agent himself. It is in principle the same dualism as before; but the agent tends to regard action rather in its constructive aspect, the spectator rather on its expressive side. Character and motive bulk much more largely in our judgments of other people than in our own decisions.

Action is not born rational, and on the basis so far offered it is not easy to see how it should ever become rational. On every side it seems to run back into some inexplicable personal caprice. As expressive it refers us to desires, emotions, instincts, habits, likings, affections – a motley crowd into which it will be convenient not to enquire further – and generally to a personal idiosyncrasy, which in practice earns a chuckle of delighted recognition when the personality is one we like, and a snort of disgust when it is one



we dislike. And on the other, the constructive plane, as formative of events, it only maintains its apparent reasonableness so long as we forget that the issues to which it works are ends dictated by this same idiosyncrasy, referring us equally to the surd of psychical fact. The irrational preferences in which action is born are presuppositions of the apparently rational preferences in which its maturity finds expression; the development is merely in the direction of increased persistence and tenacity in the pursuit of an arbitrary end.

But though action is not born rational, it strives to become rational; it tries to rationalise itself, *i.e.* to become such that it can justify itself completely to itself and to others. Moral theorists have usually attempted to exhibit morality as part of the struggle towards rationalisation or as its goal. The form under which we first find ourselves naturally impelled to rationalise action is that of purpose, which involves an analysis into means and end; and the simplest conception of morality (the special value which attaches to action as such) is that of complete success in this endeavour. Good action is that which is fully and completely rational, which means action that can exhibit itself as the pursuit of the right end by the right means.

This simple and obvious scheme breaks down completely on analysis – first, because of its own inherent weakness: action cannot be completely rationalised on these lines at all; secondly, by its inability to account for our actual moral judgments, because the rationalisation of action on these lines, so far as it can be carried out, does not necessarily mean the achievement of good action.



To see how it breaks down, let us dismiss all question as to means, supposing them in every case beyond criticism, and concentrate on ends. We find a number of different things – states or relations or events – which the various actions are said to be justified by their tendency to produce; products of action for which the actions which generate them are valued. If these are left a mere multiplicity, in no relation to one another, the adoption of a given end in a given situation remains a mere irrational caprice. They have therefore to be brought in some way into a unity, either by being exhibited as some sort of system, or by being represented as contributing to a single ultimate product or end on which they all converge. But no such ultimate end can be found: if there is a “far off divine event to which the whole creation moves,” man has not found it; and the system of all goods, though it may exist and operate unconsciously in human action, escapes definition and description, and must therefore fail to serve as the recognised justification of human action. Thus action refuses to be rationalised because ends refuse to form a unity. The choice of ends is not in practice justified by reference to an ultimate end, but rather by common consent and usage. No aim, it is assumed, is unreasonable which all men or most men adopt.

Further, such justification of action, whether complete or incomplete, is not a moral justification of action. The general principle of its argument is that the end justifies the means; and morality refuses to accept this principle. It insists on questioning means which can be shown to be the best within reach to a perfectly reasonable or generally accepted end. The



demand of morality enters not as a last clarification of the nexus of means and end, nor as an illumination of the mutual relations of our ends which reduces all to system and makes the way quite straight and plain, but as an additional complication, something impinging on these purposes from without, disturbing and hampering their execution. All attempts to reduce the apparent conflict to harmony, by representing the demand of morality as the call of a more distant or more real end, break down, and must break down, because the conflict is of the essence of the matter, and because in accepting such demands no specific product can be found to which men's effort is directed. A purpose is judged by its fruits, and claims no other test. Morality has no special fruit of its own, and the issue of the actions in which it is specially engaged is indistinguishable to the closest inspection from those in which it is not. The goodness of a good man does not depend on this, that he has a different end from a bad man, or a clearer view of the same end, or a single end where he has many. One or more of these superiorities he may well possess, but these by themselves do not constitute moral eminence. His distinctive gift and power must be sought elsewhere.

## 3

In the foregoing I have taken the term purpose as appropriate to the outward and forward looking attitude of a man who is trying to manipulate the elements of a situation so as to bring something about. It represents, then, concentration on results, and the future reference is inevitable. This interpretation is



natural if action is regarded in its constructive aspect. The systematisation of purpose so regarded is necessarily an attempt to represent each act as a contribution to a single great structure which is being built up piecemeal, some vision of the structure as a whole controlling each addition to it. But the attempt may also be made to co-ordinate action under its expressive aspect, with reference to its source in personality; and from this angle the future reference may seem less obvious – or at least less central – and a rather different interpretation of purpose may be possible. The progress of action towards rationalisation, on this interpretation, will be from the random and disconnected expressions of desire and impulse, in which the man is one-sidedly active, in the direction of an ideal in which every act is the expression of a unified and harmonious personality identifying itself wholly with the act. This view, stated thus in general terms, is immediately attractive, partly because it brings us back to the obviously fundamental ground of character, partly because our own familiar experience of life convinces us that some such internal harmony is characteristic of men who have achieved real goodness. But it is necessary to look the idea more closely in the face than that, and on closer inspection a number of things seem plain.

First, if this idea is to have any precision, the most fundamental requirement is a clear idea of the multiplicity out of which purpose and character emerge and of the unity or harmony into which they grow or try to grow. The names of Plato and Bishop Butler come to mind at once as thinkers who have tried this method of approach; but both attempts may well be judged defective in the detail of their



account. Neither of them wrestles very seriously with the primæval multitude of impulses or "particular propensions," and neither of them succeeds in establishing any positive relation between the controlling power (philosophy in Plato, conscience in Butler) and the multitude controlled; so that the organisation resembles rather a dictatorship than a system or harmony, and the fundamental problem remains unsolved – as so often in a dictatorship – whence does the dictator draw the strength to maintain his position.

Secondly, it is essential to clear up the relation between this internal order, from which as source good action proceeds, and the external efficacies in which it issues. The terminology of means and end has been used to express the relation, but it is plainly inadequate for the purpose. Nothing is properly called an end which is not causally connected with changes directly initiated in the action. But if the causal implications of these changes are followed out, they will no doubt in the long run at one point or another return upon the agent as external forces influencing his condition and behaviour; but the self influenced must be a future self, not the actual self expressed in the action. And the explanation wanted is that of the relation between the present self and its issue in act. The self is commonly thought of as *determining* the act. This present self cannot be at once the determinant and part of that which is determined, at once cause and effect. Being cause, it cannot be effect, and not being effect it cannot be the end of action. If we suppose (as seems reasonable) that this internal order is such that it can only be generated and expressed in and through action, the



terminology of means and end is plainly inappropriate to the relation between it and the action in which it is expressed.

The painter's gift is such as can be expressed only in pictures. If we are asked to apply means and end here, we are puzzled. Is the existence of the painter justified by that of the picture, or the existence of the picture by that of the painter, or are both means to the existence of art? These questions are probably not worth answering; but if a choice had to be made between the alternatives offered, we should be safest in choosing the first. It is certainly true, though it may not be a very important truth, that painters continue to exist because pictures are wanted. It is also true, and probably a much more important truth, that pictures express their makers; further, you can say without absurdity that the picture is what it is because the painter is what he is; but there is no causal sequence here as in the former case. The demand for pictures might exist for a time unsatisfied, but what is there expressed could not be unexpressed except in the sense that the picture might not exist. The painter's skill and vision and their expression are both to be found, so far as they can be distinguished, within the work of art. The causal relation, which by a convenient modern restriction has come to involve temporal sequence, is therefore excluded, and with it the terminology of means and end. The relation is between co-existents. Of course there is also the fact that the artist is not devoid of foresight and prudence, and that one of the considerations that will influence his production will be the development and maintenance of his artistic gift. He may, *e.g.*, attempt



what is for him a quite novel subject or treatment with the deliberate idea of widening his range. So far as such considerations operate, there will be a genuine future reference, and so far the terminology of means and end will be appropriate. But this is accidental, not essential; on these lines only a very partial and as it were external account of the works he actually produces can be given.

With the necessary changes all this can be transferred to the moral agent, conceived (as we are now conceiving him) as expressing a disciplined and ordered personality in action. For him also any reference to a future state of himself, to the further maintenance and development of his internal order and discipline, will be accidental, not essential – forced upon him from time to time because circumstances happen to be such as to threaten future disturbance. The act and the character shown in it are coexistents, not antecedent and consequent; and means and end, cause and effect are equally inappropriate to their relation. Where occasionally these terms are appropriate, they apply not to a relation between character and act, but to a relation between a present and a future character-act complex.

Thirdly, however true it may be that the ordered unity of character described represents the finest achievement of humanity and the highest moral value, it is impossible to find in the conception of such a unity a full and sufficient ground for the actual practical decisions which a person possessing it would take. It may be granted that in every decision he will maintain and develop this unity, and from time to time some element in his decisions may be directly due to his determination to develop and



maintain it, but in general the detail of his actions has to be supplied from elsewhere. Until this detail is in some way supplied he can have no formed purpose or intention whatever; therefore he is not rightly described as having an end. End and means are correlatives like form and matter, and the convenience of the analysis by which we distinguish them must not be allowed to make us suppose them separable. Ends exist only in means chosen for their sake, as form exists only in matter, though form and end, being universals, are not confined to this or that particular vehicle. There is no preliminary stage of mere thought, in which an end is conceived and the possible means to its realisation explored, followed by a stage of mere action, in which the plan is carried out. The active life does not cease while we think, and our thought is at its most intense while we act. The process is not from abstract to concrete, from the thought of a pleasure to the fact of enjoyment. An oak-tree does not begin with the thought of an oak, but with an acorn, which is a germinal oak, and similarly a full-grown manifestation of the human will has its antecedent in half-grown and germinal predecessors of the same kind. The early stages in the development of purpose are all of the nature of action, though they may give no indication of their existence to an external observer.

By sense and thought man is kept in continuous touch with the development of the situation in which he maintains himself; his mind reaches before and after, and without conscious effort he senses the direction of events; on the basis of what is present he is always preparing himself for what may come. He is always reviewing and revising his dispositions, putting



one tool away and taking up another, changing his own attitude and posture; and every act is part anticipation. Watch any activity which is mainly physical in its expression, and the description is easily verified. The skilled tennis player moves smoothly from his stroke to the place where the return may be expected and assumes the position of readiness to meet it. His end or aim is not embodied in a preconceived plan which he carries out according to specification; it is rather something that may be detected in the whole series of movements as a control and determinant of direction, something also that may be distinguished analytically from them as form from matter, essence from accident. The detail of expression depends on circumstance. Given the persistent aim and tendency, at any moment a variation in the opponent's behaviour would have dictated a variation in the game developed to meet them.

Now a tennis player, like other people, may be supposed to have various ends in playing tennis, many of them perfectly compatible with one another. He may want exercise or distinction or victory; he may be concerned to recommend himself to a particular person, or for a particular appointment, or to win a particular prize. Let us suppose that in the given case all such concerns are absent or quite subordinate, and that his main preoccupation is to express and maintain his own skill at the game. His attitude then will be precisely similar to the moral attitude with which we are concerned – that which takes as ultimate a certain harmony and unity of character. All ends, I have said, are formal, in that they determine the general nature of what is done, but not its detail. But if there are degrees of formality,



this preoccupation must be adjudged more formal still. For it does not determine what is to be done at all – not even in its most general outline: it merely determines that if certain things are done (if, *e.g.*, tennis is played), they shall be done in a certain way (*i.e.* in a manner worthy of the player's skill). Morality, however, unlike tennis, is co-extensive with action, and therefore with life. Hence a similar formal requirement framed in the name of morality loses this hypothetical character, and becomes a quite general demand that whatever is done shall be done in a certain way. In both cases (tennis and morality) I suggest that submission to such a requirement is not properly described as the adoption or prosecution of an end: it is a requirement generally compatible with any end and occasionally found in conflict with all; and, further, that action considered as conformed to such demands is better not described as purposive, since it is convenient to restrict purpose to the attitude of concentration on ends. But if you choose to extend the term purpose to include all open-eyed activity, then you will be justified in calling art and morality purposive, and you will have to invent another word to represent concentration on ends.

We have now arrived by a rather tortuous path at the suggestion that the moral demand is a demand that whatever is done shall be done in a certain way. Vague as this formula at present is, I want to consider it seriously and on its own merits. But first let me make a remark arising from my use of the word hypothetical above. It may be supposed that when I use hypothetical of the demand of skill and refuse to use it of the demand of morality, I am introducing a well-known Kantian distinction and preparing the



way for the categorical imperative. Well, it would perhaps be no bad thing if our argument brought us back to Kant; but I feel bound to point out that it has not so far done so. My contrast was between a restricted and an unrestricted reference, between something universally applicable and something which applies only in a special region. The character of the demand, where it happens to be in place, is not affected by this distinction. To the tennis player engaged in his game, to the artist at work upon his art, the demand of his skill for its maintenance and due expression is as categorical as any demand can be: there is nothing conditional about it. As it operates, it controls and limits the use of skill in ways which the ends in view alone fail to explain, and we call it the artist's self-respect, or sometimes the artistic conscience. The last is a good name for it, for it is, as we shall now see, the principle which in that limited but autonomous sphere plays the part which in life as a whole is played by the moral principle. It does not determine the work to be done, but it lays down conditions negative and positive as to its doing.

Action, as I said, strives to become rational and self-justifying. In its constructive aspect, ordered under the notion of purpose, it can achieve a certain unity, but not that final and satisfying unity which it desires. We have here the suggestion of another principle of unity – not a rival, I think, but an ally – which may tie some of the loose ends and give a general continuity to the practical life.

## 4

Let us go back for a moment to our tennis player. He is playing a game; and into the origination and



conduct of the game all sorts of motives may enter, each emphasising some particular element in the complex activity and some particular line of future continuation, all, however, depending on the established convention that he is trying to beat his opponent. This convention dictates one standing purpose or aim which he must maintain throughout; and the other motives derived from probable consequences of the activity presuppose this standing purpose and rather strengthen than weaken it. (Of course he might have reasons for wishing not to beat his opponent, but such a motive would be an interference with the game, and so far as effective would introduce an element of deceit and pretence into his action.) Distinct in kind from all these motives and calculations, but also capable of modifying the player's behaviour, is the player's tennis conscience. If he is to play tennis, he will play tennis, not pat-ball. This determination of his will not normally interfere with any projects that he may have built upon the game. The more truly he plays tennis, the better he plays; the better he plays, the more likely he is to win the game, to get his exercise, etc. Normally there is perfect harmony; but occasionally, exceptionally, there is trouble. The player finds himself indignantly turning away from tactics which would bring certain victory – why? Because, he would probably say, they are not his idea of tennis. Now, considered with reference to victory or any other end pursued in the game, this diversion necessarily appears as a limitation of the means by which they may be secured. The end is not denied, but its ability to justify these means is denied. Thus it is an insistence that an act shall be done in a certain way, a specification of conditions positive and



negative. It makes its presence felt as limiting the activity, just as the law of the land enters occasionally as a limit and determinant into the lives of its citizens.

This is how it inevitably appears to one concentrated on the issue and the result. But what is it? and what is its title to interfere? We have already seen what it is, and we have already vindicated its title. The man is actually playing tennis, and the basis of the interference is simply the recognition that this is what he is doing, and the demand, naturally associated with it, that he shall really and truly do it. There could be no simpler or more fundamental consideration. For though as an explicit factor in decision the conception of tennis-playing may be an occasional and intermittent visitor, yet no proof or apology is required surely for the thesis that this conception is really the basis and foundation on which all the rest is built. This is the root from which the fruits to which our purposes are directed spring; and if the root is poisoned or cut away, the fruits will soon fail and wither. It is not truly our purposes that are interfered with; they are at best intermittent, dependent on circumstance and opportunity. It is the activity that is the constant factor and continuing form, and it is this that occasionally is endangered by the material in which it finds embodiment. On such occasions the activity asserts itself in self-defence against the danger of self-mutilation or suicide under pressure of events.

What I wish to maintain is that the basis of moral judgment and the root of moral values is a similar but quite general conception of will and action as a continuing form finding its changing embodiment in



the changing situations of life: that such a conception is at the foundation of all effort and every purpose, however rare may be the proofs it gives of its existence in the familiar form of scruples of conscience or of exactions in the name of duty which can be traced to no other source. Here alone, I would argue, is the unity we were seeking to be found – so much unity, at least, as is to be reached by a finite being in his finitude. It cannot be found, as we have seen, in any end; nor can it be found at any point in the changing states of the self or by any abstraction from them; but it can be found here because this is a universal necessarily finding application in every least portion of conduct. This conception is obscurely at work in human life from its lowliest beginnings, shaping and guiding desire and affection, and at work equally in the highest reaches of human genius and heroism. In all action there is effort, for effort is the law of life; but the conception provides a criterion by which the effort may be justified in itself, not merely for what it brings. There need not, however, be conflict, as when conscience is said to make us cowards or duty to fall out with desire. Such internal conflicts, however frequent they may be, spring from avoidable defects, and are therefore pathological. It is the most serious surrender of the true claims of morality to give in to the popular error that morality is involved only where such conflicts exist; but it would be even more fatally foolish to deny the reality of these conflicts and their vital importance in the life of the individual. And if all this is right, the task of the moral philosopher is simply and sufficiently defined as that of defining this conception of action and its applications. He will have to show how out of



its collisions with the circumstances of life arise our distinctions of good and bad, of right and wrong, of duty and desire, and all other familiar features of the problem of conduct. Further, if he is to remain true to the name of philosopher, he will have to show also the relation between these moral values and others which the human spirit is no less concerned to maintain.

With the wider issues I am not now concerned. I must be content with indicating in this cursory way that for me too they exist. One thing only remains, by way of conclusion, for me to do – to relate what I have said to the problem stated at the outset and show how, to my mind, it relieves it. We begun by recognising two kinds of value relevant to action; those which a spectator will assert an action itself to possess when he calls it a good or fine action, and those which an agent credits to things round him when he shows an active preference, *e.g.* for a tidy over an untidy room. I took an example of conflict in which the agent is supposed to modify a course of action which he had already begun and felt inclined to continue, not because of any flaw in the original calculation, but as we say for some moral scruple. This scruple was supposed to be occasioned by an act of imaginative self-judgment in which he regarded himself as from without and saw that his action was not good. But this we felt could not be the normal and characteristic expression of the moral principle. For how much better if he had been directly inclined by his natural benevolence to the right course of action instead of being indirectly forced into it by the fear of self-condemnation! Are we to think, as some moralists have thought, that it is



the fear of the pains of self-reproach or the love of the delights of self-approbation that makes men moral? Every unsophisticated mind will be against us here, and will agree rather with Marcus Aurelius in preferring the man who "has no conception that he has done anything whatever, but may be compared to the vine that bears her grapes and seeks nothing more when once she has done her work and ripened her fruit." "A man who has done a good deed," he says, "should be like a horse that has run its race, a dog that has tracked its game, or a bee that has gathered its honey."

Now the question of the kinds and modes of self-consciousness is much too large a question to introduce at the tail end of a discussion like this. But I may remind you that those very Stoic philosophers, from whom Marcus Aurelius learned thus to prize unself-consciousness in well-doing, themselves insisted that self-consciousness was of the essence of morality. So that clearly some distinctions are necessary here. In the meantime surely the conception at which we have arrived does throw some light on the matter. There are these two sets of values, no doubt, but neither of them is ultimate. They are only two manifestations of something more fundamental, of the demand of action that it shall complete its nature and justify itself. The fact of conflict and hesitation does certainly show that this completion is not reached; and the victory of right, however creditable, does certainly imply a possible better state in which right would have had no opponent. So far the earlier interpretation is confirmed. But this better is not something better than morality: it is morality itself. For the judgment of oneself in action which is of the



essence of morality is not a judgment of praise and blame, in which a man sees his own acts with the same eyes as those of his friends, and rejoices or despairs accordingly, making all allowances for defective equipment and restricting circumstance; it is something far more persistent and exacting than that, and much less respectful of existing fact. It is the tormenting consciousness of a stricter logic, a higher level of execution, always within reach if the spirit is willing, which leaves no room for rest or contentment, but yet justifies the act so far as it succeeds in pressing its claim. It is not egoism or altruism; it is no thought of self or others, or of the relation between them. But it may take Spinoza's name, the *conatus in suo esse perseverandi*, "the effort to persevere in one's being": for he who is committed to living is committed to living as well as he can.



## IV

### IS THERE A MORAL END? <sup>1</sup>

I SUPPOSE we shall be agreed that positive moral significance belongs to any action in which a man does what he thinks right because he thinks it right. To act thus is to adopt the distinctively moral attitude, just as to create what is beautiful because it is beautiful is to adopt the distinctively æsthetic attitude. The question proposed for this discussion is a question as to the further interpretation of this attitude. In particular: has the man who so acts some end, aim, or purpose in view, and does he accept the act which he adopts and reject its alternatives as consistent and inconsistent respectively with this end? Does the judgment that this act which I now propose to do is the right thing to do allow of such analysis that the act may be seen as a means to an end? Is there a moral good which is furthered in every action which has a positive moral value? To this question I wish to propose a negative answer. If we may term the practical attitude in question the moral attitude and its motive the moral motive, my thesis is that the moral attitude and motive are not purposive.

Man first shows his reasonableness in action by making action purposive, and in purpose means and end necessarily fall apart. For mere impulse there is

<sup>1</sup> This was the opening paper in a Symposium before the Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the *Mind* Association held at Bristol in July, 1928. There were two further papers, by Professor W. G. de Burgh and Mr. W. D. Ross. See Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume VIII, *Mind, Matter and Purpose*.



neither means nor end: there is only a blind fumbling after action of a certain pattern and tendency, as the occasion offers scope for it. By purpose we see the occasion as opportunity, we value it for what we can make of it, and we take care to act so that the results of our action, near and remote, are likely to be such as we shall welcome when they come. The mere impulse to eat will lead us to eat what is bad for us – or if it does not, the credit is Nature's, not ours; but, harnessed to purpose, eating is stimulated and restrained in view of some end, to keep strong and well, to enjoy oneself, to live within one's income. Within the limits set by the end or ends conceived the purposed action is guaranteed, so far as there is no error in the calculation, as good: the action is reasonable and can explain itself.

But on these lines action never becomes wholly reasonable. It is never able fully to explain itself. Both end and means are seen on analysis to contain surds or unexplained remainders. That certain kinds of things or activity interest and amuse us, certain others do not, is a fact not easily altered and indeed not fundamentally alterable; and on such facts all practicable purposes depend for their end. These interests are what Butler called "particular affections": they mark out certain things as good, and the goodness of the things thus marked out is presupposed in the purposive attitude. "Self-love," says Butler, "does not constitute *this* or *that* to be our interest or good; but, our interest or good being constituted by Nature and supposed, self-love only puts us upon obtaining and securing it." Butler speaks of self-love; but it does not matter, so far as I can see, in what terms the purposive attitude is



conceived, whether as directed to self-interest, one's own happiness, or to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, or even as self-realisation: in each case this limitation stands, that the end is "constituted by Nature and supposed" in the purposive activity. So much of the end.

That the means can never rid itself of a certain accidental and contingent character, and remains in external relation to the end which it helps to realise, this is, I suppose, generally conceded, but it is not always grasped how deep-seated this contingency is, and the proper consequences are not always drawn. The difficulty is concealed and slurred over by loose and misleading applications of the terminology of purpose where it does not apply. End and means are allowed to "coincide," or the moral non-purposive attitude to persons is described as an attitude which treats them as ends-in-themselves. Such attempts to save the face of purpose should at least be postponed until we have seen that face and considered whether it is worth saving.

The discovery of means to a given end is essentially the discovery of a causal nexus. Means are called means so far as they are productive of something else which is called end; and their value lies in their capacity to produce this. One element in the means selected to any end must always be a certain expenditure of effort and energy by the agent; and this effort, being a means, has its value not in itself but for what it produces. Further the best means is that which involves the least expenditure of effort; thus the purposive activity has no value for itself, but implies an ideal in which it is wholly superseded, a state of affairs in which all our ends are realised without activity



on our part. The ground of both characteristics is to be found in the severe abstraction of the purposive attitude. It examines a situation solely with a view to its possible contribution to a development regarded as desirable. But the elements which are capable of assisting this development have also a nature of their own, rich in other possibilities, and, even while contributing to the development desired, will also necessarily be assisting other developments which the limitations set by the purpose in hand will conceal from view or dismiss as irrelevant. The agent, similarly, is a man with a human nature, of which this purpose and the effort it exacts from him is only a partial and temporary manifestation; and if his individuality is to be saved, that can only be by some act and attitude which corrects and supplements purpose by a more concrete view of the situation. Purpose alone will never fully justify action to itself.

These very simple considerations suffice, I hope, to show what I mean when I say that any account of action in terms of purpose must be incomplete and defective. If their substantial correctness is conceded, it does not of course follow that there is no moral purpose; only that, if there is, it will provide an explanation of action exhibiting these defects. Probably, then, the best way to proceed will be to take certain admitted characteristics of the moral attitude and see how far these agree or are reconcilable with our diagnosis of the purposive attitude.

First, it is admitted by writers of widely different schools of thought that the claims of morality, as they operate in human life, present on the face of it a very different appearance from the claims of policy



or purpose. They come as a recognised obligation to do or not to do, which is often seen to involve the temporary surrender or restriction of a desire in itself innocent, of a perfectly legitimate purpose. All serious moralists have had to recognise this very obvious and familiar contrast. Even the Greeks, in spite of their preoccupation with purpose, were unable wholly to deny the difference in kind between the moral and the purposive attitude. For Plato the virtue of the philosopher, who has passed beyond all calculation of profit and loss, is the only virtue which deserves the name. In Aristotle's *Ethics* the moral act is an act wholly inspired by love of itself: it is τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα, *i.e.*, directed to its own beauty or nobility; and he makes no attempt whatever to show that this motive is merely an ultimate clarification of the motive operating in less deserving action. On the contrary, he speaks always as if it were a motive peculiar to the good man and different in kind from others. It is not necessary to multiply instances. Butler speaks of the magisterial exertions of conscience; Kant of the categorical, as opposed to the hypothetical, imperative; and John Stuart Mill has to recognise as the most serious objection to the theory of utility, the apparently absolute and imperative character of the claims of justice. In explaining this absolute away as the socially salutary, but theoretically indefensible, conversion of a difference in degree into a difference in kind, he took the course which must I believe in the end be taken by all who believe that morality is purposive. In a word: *purpose will not yield "right" and "wrong."*

Secondly, let us consider the judgment of a spectator, or of the agent himself in retrospect,



attributing moral value or dis-value to an action which has been done. It will be admitted that this judgment is often uncomfortably sharp and decisive; but as much could be said of judgments recognising failure in reference to purpose. The point is that here again there is an apparent difference in kind, which has to be explained away by the champion of purpose. Failure to button a collar, to mend a toy for a child, to secure election to an office – all these are mortifying in their degree. The aims differ in importance; and one failure is more difficult to recover from, both in fact and in temper, than another. But what have these in common with the condemnation of treachery, or the remorse of the traitor? The instances of purpose chosen are all cases in which failure or success declares itself at once; but this is the exception rather than the rule. Often we must wait for years before we know whether our efforts are justified by success. But in moral judgment, many as the obscurities are, even in judging oneself, this complication never enters. Judgment is in no sense or degree conditional upon the actual event. In a word: *purpose will not yield “good” and “bad.”*

Thirdly, it is generally admitted that the action upon which moral praise and blame are directed is something to which motive is central. An act done with a bad motive, may, it is supposed, be right (*i.e.*, it may correspond generally in externals with the course of action which a good man in that situation would feel obliged to follow), but it cannot be morally good and deserving of praise. This seems to mean that in praise and blame the action is considered as the external expression of a spiritual



state or activity, and that it is this activity as so expressed that is praised or blamed. Now clearly the typical end is a result external to the activity which helps to produce it. Often like victory, peace, prosperity, it comes as a longed for event or an ascent to a new level of life, closing a doubtful struggle on a lower plane. So obvious is this that our professed champion of purpose, the utilitarian, can find no place for motive within the act. "Motive," in Mill's well-known statement, "has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent." A good motive, he means, is one which normally issues in socially profitable action; but, if exceptionally such a motive issues in unprofitable action, we must not be deterred by habitual respect for a valuable motive from recognising the badness of the act. Apparently, however, our estimate of the agent is not to be affected by our condemnation of the act, which amounts to a confession that this will not be a moral condemnation of the act after all. I have not finished with this point, but I will sum it up in the words: *purpose excludes motive from moral judgment.*

There offers in this connection a rather tempting opening to a return to purpose by means of some notion of self-affirmation or self-realisation. Many great names, including Aristotle and Spinoza, and, among moderns, T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley, might be cited as at least partially endorsing a purposive interpretation of morality in this sense. If the end is a state of oneself (it may be argued) then the present state, by which it is to be achieved, must be more than a mere means, since its externality to the end is broken down. The identity of



the person through his successive acts destroys the contingency of the means in relation to the end. The means acquire a certain intrinsic value by their intimate relation to the end; while the fact of growth and development of character still justifies a certain emphasis on future results. The self to be realised or affirmed in moral action is not (so Bradley tells us) the actual or particular self; it is a whole. It is not an exclusive self, "a repellent point or . . . mere individual"; it is a social self. "The self which is myself, which is mine, is not merely me." Thus the self which is to be realised both does and does not exist. So far as it does not exist, we are entitled to find purpose, achievement, controlled progress towards an end, in the moral attitude: for an end, as Bradley says, "is something to be reached, otherwise not an end." So far as it does exist, the moral attitude may be regarded as conferring absolute value on the actual, and we may say either that the notion of end drops out, since this self is not something to be reached, or that means and end here coincide. On these lines we are offered a reconciliation between purpose and its critics, which is to do justice to the truth contained in each of the opposing views.

I have not space to examine the foundations of this formula of self-realisation. Bradley bases it on psychological considerations which to me are far from convincing. I do not think it is true that "in desire what we want, so far as we want it, is ourselves in some form, or is some state of ourselves; . . . our wanting anything else would be psychologically inexplicable." Nor, even if that were accepted, would it follow that the moral effort is an attempt to



achieve some state of ourselves; for it is not self-evident that all action is the expression of desire. But the insecurity of these foundations is not our present concern. Whatever the arguments may be by which it is justified, the formula of self-realisation owes its popularity largely to the fact that it seems to offer an answer to the question, "Why should I be moral?" (this is the title of Bradley's essay from which I have been quoting), *i.e.*, that it appears to offer an interpretation of morality in terms of purpose and end. We must remember that it was advanced in fact by these English writers, as an alternative to utilitarianism. It is on this side that it requires examination here.

I fully admit that if we are to state morality in terms of purpose, we must make the end "ourselves in some form or some state of ourselves," and that self-realisation, by offering such an end, escapes some of the worst inadequacies of other purposive interpretations. I would also admit that the doctrine of self-realisation is sometimes so stated that none of the objections made above to a purposive interpretation seem to touch it at all. But I should claim that in these latter statements the element of purpose, which is not really essential to the doctrine, has been tacitly suppressed; and that where the interpretation is genuinely purposive, though the formula of self-realisation is more adequate to the facts, in the sense that it makes possible a less viciously abstract view of them, it obscures the essence of morality quite as effectually as any other purposive interpretation.

Self-realisation is conceived purposively when it is taken to mean the conscious development of the potentialities of the self by action, even if these



potentialities are supposed to be such as will eventually be expressed in action. It is the future reference, the emphasis on development, that is crucial; and it is this that in my opinion is irreconcilable with the data of the moral consciousness. I do not of course deny that it is possible, legitimate, and even (within limits) laudable to aim at the development of one's character or at what we often call (following a usage fixed by Aristotle) moral improvement. What I maintain is that whole-hearted attention to this aim will not ensure the rightness of the action in which it is expressed; and that it is so far from being the essence of morality that in certain circumstances it may be condemned as immoral. I think that the formula of self-realisation and the writings of those who maintain it lend themselves to the interpretation which I have given, and that in this respect it is a misleading doctrine.

The moral attitude is essentially a concern for the rightness of action. A true instinct exhibits it as interfering with the execution of purpose in stigmatising as immoral the doctrine that the end justifies the means. The phrase implies that morality requires that all means shall be justified in some other way and by some other standard than their value for this or any end: that however magnificent is the prospect opened out by the proposed course of action, and however incontestable the power of the means chosen to bring this prospect nearer, there is still always another question to be asked: not a question whether in achieving this you will not perhaps diminish your chances of achieving something still more important; but a question of another kind. "There is a decency required," as Browning



said; and this demand of decency is prepared to sacrifice, in the given case, any purpose whatever. If the call of duty were the expression of a purpose, it would have to be a purpose which embraced all purposes, from which all others could be shown as derivative, including all creation and even eternity in its scope. We are offered instead our own moral perfection. But what is that to put in the scale against the interests of humanity, the fortunes of countless generations yet unborn? As judges of actions and motives we should rejoice to see a man jeopardising his own moral development when thereby he seemed to serve the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." Thus our moral consciousness assures us: (1) that the end does not justify the means, *i.e.*, that there is no end whatever by which alone the detail of action can be guaranteed as right; (2) that a man's own development or moral perfection is not the highest end to which his action can be directed.

Thus if self-realisation is to be retained as descriptive of the moral attitude, it must, first, be deprived of all reference to the future. So far as morality involves the consciousness of doing right, it involves the affirmation and approval of a state of the self; but this state is an actual state and is approved in itself, not as the germ of some future state. Secondly, the state which is approved has no essential self-reference at all. In it the concern for the rightness of action expresses itself in right action, and the action itself has such reference to self and others as the circumstances may dictate. The activity as a whole is no more properly described as self-realisation than the activity of painting a picture, or working out a



mathematical problem, or any other successful human enterprise. Thus self-realisation becomes a purely formal conception which fails to touch the distinctive characteristics of the moral attitude.

So far I have been arguing that morality is not purposive; that the hypothesis of a moral purpose is inadequate to the facts, whether the end proposed to it is outside the self (as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number") or falls within it (as in the doctrine of self-realisation). To complete my statement it is now only necessary for me to consider briefly the question of the precise place of purpose in the concrete act in which the moral value is realised.

Action is always the alteration of a situation, the state of the self being a feature of the situation altered: and, whatever else action is, it must always remain that. In deliberate action the situation is intentionally altered, and, since intention and purpose are inseparable, such action is purposive. If action is to deserve its name, to be fully willed (and evidently much that passes for action is not fully willed), the alterations which it introduces must be intentionally introduced. Thus here again there can be no going back. The concrete moral act must be the alteration of a situation, and that alteration must be intentional: the act must be purposive. This means that the agent must needs accept judgment by results. Failure is failure; and its bitterness is not diminished, rather increased, by the conviction that the energy spent fruitlessly in it had another justification. The adequacy of the means adopted in action to the end proposed – and not merely to the end actually in view at the time, but to that in relation



to other ends and purposes adopted by the agent; and in relation, further, to the communities of which he is a member and their life and activity – the accurate diagnosis and adjustment of this far-reaching causal nexus is the internal logic of the act, the test by which the agent himself in the moment of action implicitly claims that it shall be judged. If it fails by this test, it fails; but the fault, if fault there be, is a fault of knowledge, of judgment, of imagination, of breadth of vision; never a moral fault. The act is not shown to have been wrong. Complications arise in fact owing to the limitations of knowledge, the different kinds and sources of ignorance, unforeseen contingencies, and so on; but here these may be ignored, and we may say simply that this is the field of purpose and in it action is discriminated by achievement and non-achievement, failure and success.

Morality is to be regarded as supervening upon purpose in the sense that in the moral attitude everything that belongs to purpose is before the mind and none of it is denied. Moral considerations do not arise upon further exploration of the causal nexus, or by the introduction of some wider and deeper purpose, or by the transference of the purposive problem from a purely individual to a social plane. Purpose must complete its own work, which includes all this; but when its work is completed, the problem of conduct is not yet solved. The moral consciousness supervenes with a further demand, which creates the specifically moral aspect of the problem. Until this demand is satisfied no project of action may be passed for execution. The demand is, in short, that the activity of securing a certain many-sided result



by a course of action at every point manifold in its implications shall be seen to be in all its stages a fit expression of the human will. The enquiry dictated by this demand differs from enquiries undertaken in the interest of purpose in three main points. First, the action is regarded not as a contribution to the world's welfare, but as a case of spiritual activity or self-expression. Secondly, the transitive character of the process, with the inevitable emphasis on the issue, thus drops into the background: the activity has to justify itself as a whole and in every moment. Thirdly, the values recognised are intrinsic and absolute, not relative and conditional like those of purpose. A project of action which survives this enquiry passes into action which can claim to be fully justified and to be morally justified, and to have a value in itself apart from its results.

The concrete moral act, then, is purposive. If it served no purpose, it would be pointless, and what is pointless cannot be right. But it is a familiar fact that morality often interferes with the execution of our purposes; and it seems that it is just in such conflicts that the most unquestionable moral values are revealed. Surely in such cases at least (it may be urged) morality must supply some purpose of its own, if we are not to be left with a void, with an act which is no act because it is pointless. On this I have two remarks to make. (1) Man has many purposes and interests, and no attempt to reduce them to one has ever been successful. A line of action which obstructs one purpose will assist another. And, in fact, it is impossible to find a moral command or prohibition which has no support from expediency, though in many cases proof may be unattainable that



the line of action enjoined is the most expedient open to the agent. Thus the action need not be pointless because it runs counter in its effect to the ruling purpose.

(2) What morality approves or rejects, in part or as a whole, is a concrete purposing, not in general or in respect merely of its direction, but as worked out in its full detail and in every detail of it. To this its response is immediate and intuitive. The moral judgment, like the æsthetic judgment, does not argue and cannot be argued. All that can be done, in case of dispute, is to call attention to details in the object for which approval or disapproval is claimed, which may have escaped attention or received less than their proper weight. Hence the main part of the discussion of a disputed moral judgment will be conducted in terms of means and end, and will concern what are called the consequences of the act. The rest will be a reassertion of the variance of the intuitive judgment at each point. It is this that gives rise to the illusion that the whole dispute can be reduced to a question of means and end. But though the judgment is immediate and intuitive and cannot be argued, yet in morality, as in art, reflective analysis can detect principles at work in it. To extract these principles and define them is the main task of the branch of philosophy which has morality for its subject. The whole history of ethics suggests that any sound analysis of moral judgments will find at work in them, not merely a conception of the dignity of human nature, of its proper organisation and deportment, as something to be maintained by the individual agent in all his actions, but also of the relation of man to man in society and in a spiritual



kingdom, perhaps, to which religion alone gives entry. But when the philosophical analysis has been completed and the metaphysical foundations of the moral judgment have been finally laid bare, we shall have to recognise that these principles were all along operative in shaping human desires and the purposes in which they are co-ordinated, and that the limitations imposed on desire by purpose and on purpose by morality were therefore no external and arbitrary interferences but corrections demanded by the inner logic of the impulse or purpose itself. Πάντα γὰρ φύσει ἔχει τι θεῖον.



## V

### REPRESENTATION<sup>1</sup>

#### I

IN these days, when, if the words of constitutions can be trusted, sovereign parliaments based on manhood or adult suffrage are rapidly extending their sway over the greater part of the world, there is surely no conception more deserving of the attention of the political theorist than that of Representation. There was a time when government for most men meant monarchy, when ruler meant king or king's minister. To-day, for most men, ruler means Parliament or ministers responsible to Parliament, and government means representative government. In those former times the political theorist would naturally take the king or prince for his centrepiece and devote himself to expounding the nature and attributes of his office. "For from the prince, as from a well-spring, cometh the flood of all that is good or evil upon the people" (Sir T. More). In our own day, he would perhaps do well to devote himself first and mainly to reflection on the meaning of this term representation, standing as it does for something which is taken by general consent to constitute the distinctive feature of the normal modern type of government. He may run the risk of speaking merely for his own day; but he should at least be sure of remaining near the centre of his subject.

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy*, October, 1931.



Representation may be taken in a very wide sense—so wide that any and every form of government must be allowed to possess a representative character. By a characteristic *tour de force*, Thomas Hobbes enabled himself to describe his absolute ruler, authorised once for all in the original contract, and endowed with plenary powers to decide for ever every matter of common concern, as the representative of his subjects. He acted with their authority, and they took his act as theirs. But whatever the justice of this conception may be, it would include far too much for the purpose of the present discussion. The term must be limited more narrowly; and it will be restricted, I think, suitably to our ideas of representative government, if we impose a double limitation. Presuming that the body represented is a people, and that the representative is the government (or part of the government) of that people, (1) the representation must be multiple, so that there is a representative body consisting of a number of persons each of whom is a representative; (2) the relation between the representative and the represented must be such as not to be exhausted in the bare statement that the representative has been authorised to act by the represented: or, positively, the representatives, collectively and individually, must feel themselves to be in some degree dependent on the good pleasure of those whom they represent. By these two limitations the Hobbesian sovereign is excluded. The first alone would merely exclude his King; but the second excludes also his Assembly, for it excludes the possibility of once-for-all unlimited authorisation. The provision by which in constitutions such dependence is legally secured



(so far as it can be legally secured) is that of the terminable representative mandate. This secures indirectly that the representatives shall feel themselves dependent on popular opinion; and without this there would be no obvious point of connection between representation and democracy.

The central question for me is that of the precise nature of this second limitation. This is the question on which I want to concentrate the present discussion. My reason is the reason already suggested, that we have here the link, if there is one, between representation and democracy. Now it is in the name of democracy that the modern world is asked to accept representative government; and if there is no such link, the modern world is grossly deceived. In that case, it must seek for other forms in which to embody its democratic ideals. But with possible alternatives I am not here concerned. I wish to confine my view to the representative parliament, the generally accepted basis of government in modern Europe, with a view to discovering in what its representative character consists, in the hope of diminishing or removing some of the confusions which beset modern politics, and especially those confusions which attend the use in this connection of the term democracy and its cognates.

As to the word democracy itself, I would make one preliminary observation. It would, I imagine, be quite possible and legitimate to give the word a precise legal or constitutional significance. Government, one might say, is democratically organised so far as it is directly and constitutionally dependent on the acts of the general body of adult citizens. In this sense of the word, typical democratic provisions



are those for the election of a president by popular vote or for the submission of a law, which has received the assent of parliament, to the citizens generally for endorsement in what is known as a Referendum. But the share which the citizen body can take in the work of government by these and other devices is very limited, and can never be sufficient by itself to justify the description of any government as generally and fundamentally democratic. It is best therefore to empty the word of all constitutional significance, and to make it stand rather for an end or ideal with reference to which constitutional arrangements may be assessed and adopted. The end need not be accepted; there may be other ends which temporarily or even permanently have precedence over this; but there is this end, to which, at least since the eighteenth century, men of all countries have persistently and often passionately devoted their thoughts and energies. It is the idea of a nation which is master of its own fate, which manages its own affairs. This is not a constitutional notion at all, though it has at various times tended to identify itself with certain special kinds of constitutional provision. It involves certainly the notion of the people as sovereign, but not necessarily in the sense which the constitutional lawyer gives to that term. The kind of sovereignty claimed or hoped for is more ultimate and more axiomatic, constitutive of the constitution itself and penetrating into the furthest dim detail of government. Such sovereignty cannot be secured, though it can be furthered, by appropriate constitutional provisions.

Thus my question as to the relation of representation and democracy is not a question as to the mutual



relation of certain constitutional features, but as to the serviceability of a certain type of constitutional provision for the end of self-government, in the name of which it is commonly recommended.

## 2

Let us now collect and compare some influential opinions as to the meaning to be attached to representation.

Round the roots of parliaments, stretching far back into the Middle Ages, we find the ground scattered with traces of recurrent controversy as to the status of the representative. The question was, how far was he free to commit those who sent him and in whose name he spoke? It seemed reasonable that the *délégants* (to borrow the French word) should have the right to bind their delegate by definite instructions. Both in England and in France we find kings, incommoded politically by this prejudice, exerting themselves to secure the maximum freedom for the representative. The growth of the legislative responsibilities of parliament, in England at least, exerted pressure in the same direction. In the eighteenth century the freedom of the member of parliament to decide any matter that might come up at his unfettered discretion was amply established. In 1774, when Burke made his famous speech at Bristol, the King's writ might still confess to a doubt on the point by asking that burgesses should be given unrestricted powers, but in fact Burke was correct in saying that "authoritative instructions" and mandates binding on the member were "unknown to the laws of this land" and foreign to the "order and tenor of our constitution."



This conception of what the continental textbooks of the present day often call *free representation* (as opposed to tied representation) found classic expression in a number of decisions, reached not without opposition by the French Revolutionary Assembly and Convention of 1789 and the following years. In the form then given to it it has become a foundation stone of modern parliamentarism. The French Constitution of 1791 laid it down that "the representatives elected in the departments will not be representatives of a particular department but of the whole nation, and they may not be given any mandate." Similarly the German constitution of 1919, repeating with an unimportant variation a provision of the constitution of 1871, states: "the deputies are representatives of the whole people: they are subject only to their conscience and are not bound by mandates" (*an Aufträge nicht gebunden*). More bluntly, the Swiss Constitution of 1874 says: "the members of the two Councils vote without instructions." More bluntly still, Czechoslovakia in 1920 ordains of members of parliament that "they shall not receive orders from anybody."

It will be noted in these examples that so far as a reason is given or suggested for the prohibition of instructions, it is one typical of French revolutionary sentiment. Instructions are feared, not because they might impede or delay the work of government, but because they might threaten the unity of the nation. But that this was a commonplace before the French Revolution began is proved by Burke's speech at Bristol, in which this very point is made with what might even seem unnecessary



emphasis. Whatever the source, however, the tenor of the principle is plain: the unity of the nation precludes that section of it which is a constituency from tying its representative by definite instructions.

In the French Revolutionary debates, from which this principle emerged triumphant, an alternative view was advocated, in avowed connection with Rousseau, for instance by Pétion and Robespierre. They argued that the member of parliament is the agent or mandatary of his constituents and is therefore subject to the will of those who give him his commission. On this ground Robespierre in 1793 urged the right of recall not merely for members of parliament but for all public officials, as a formal recognition of their continuous "physical" responsibility. "A people," he said, "whose mandataries are responsible to no one for their conduct has no constitution. . . . If this is the meaning of representative government, I accept all the anathemas which J. J. Rousseau pronounced upon it." The principle behind this is of course the idea of self-government as a condition of freedom. "In a free state," wrote Montesquieu in 1748, "any man who is considered to possess a free soul ought to be governed by himself: therefore the people as a body ought to hold the legislative power. But, this being in large states impossible and in small states in many ways inconvenient, the people has to do by its representatives whatever it cannot do by itself." Montesquieu goes on to ask that the representatives shall receive only general instructions, but he asks this in the name of expediency, because of the delays and postponements which detailed instructions would necessarily entail.



This opposed view did not speak in the name of democracy, because that word was commonly taken to stand for the direct democracies of antiquity, and representative government was therefore conceived as a substitute for it. It spoke in the name of popular or national sovereignty, and argued that the decision of Parliament cannot be the decision of the people unless the behaviour of the member of parliament is controlled, at least in general, by the constituents to whom he owes his membership of Parliament. To them the high sounding phrase, that he is to consider himself the representative of the whole nation, is a mere evasion. Burke said to the Bristol electors: "You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but he is a member of *parliament*." To which the obvious reply is that the antithesis is false. The ordinary description of members of Parliament, current in Burke's own day, is sufficient to show this. The Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke would naturally be described as member of Parliament for Bristol. A special relation to a part does not necessarily hinder or preclude service of the whole; and in any case, it is parliament as a whole that is entitled to speak of itself as representing the nation, not any individual member of parliament. The contention is that this special relation involves, or ought to involve, some degree of dependence on the side of the representative.

In modern times, the opponents of free representation have never been silenced. Few responsible theorists have given their cause any countenance: the weight of learning and experience has indeed been thrown heavily in the scale against them. But,



in spite of this, they have gained ground in practice, and experienced observers like Bryce note with regret the tendency for the representative to become more and more of a delegate. Their practical successes have not been in the direction foreshadowed by Robespierre – that of tying the individual member more closely to his constituents by defining the terms or diminishing the length of the mandate, or by providing opportunity of revocation – but rather in the direction of securing a greater responsiveness on the part of Parliaments generally to extra-Parliamentary opinion, and this less by any legal enactment than by the increasing prevalence of certain practical conventions. The increasing popularity of the referendum is the chief legal development which comes into question here, since the demand for annual Parliaments collapsed; but the referendum has not yet secured a footing in England, and far more important than the referendum for the future of representative government is the increased tendency of the English House of Commons to look to “the country,” as manifested in general elections, by-elections, petitions, or the public Press, for general instructions as to the work that needs doing and the manner in which it should be done. Our elder statesmen have again and again protested and shaken their heads. In the early years of the twentieth century Conservatives and Liberals and constitutional lawyers united in deploring this “modern theory of the mandate.” But nevertheless each party in turn has found itself obliged to make concessions to it: the protests have now ceased, and it has become a generally accepted convention of Parliamentary debate that, though the individual



member may be as free as air, Parliament as a whole is, not indeed legally constrained, but morally obliged to conform in all important decisions to the wishes or, as is sometimes said, to the will of the people, so far as this can be ascertained. In this form the general thesis that the representative relation requires a certain subordination of the will of the representative to those he represents has succeeded in establishing itself as a principle of practical politics.

Meanwhile other voices have made themselves heard. Disappointment with the fruits of Parliamentary government has naturally led to fundamental criticism of the principle of representation itself. Mr. G. D. H. Cole's criticism will serve as a specimen of this line of thought. "The idea of democracy," he tells us,<sup>1</sup> "has become tangled up with a particular theory of representative government based on a totally false theory of representation. This false theory is that one man can represent a number of others and that his will can be treated as a democratic expression of their wills." To this he objects that "no man can represent another man and no man's will can be treated as a substitute for or representation of the wills of others." But it turns out that he has nothing really to put in place of representation. The real vice of the situation for him is the "omnicompetence" of Parliament, with its corollary that a representative is a representative for all human concerns. Divide these concerns up along the natural lines of division and appoint separate representatives for each; make representation, as he puts it, specific and functional instead of

<sup>1</sup> *Social Theory* (1920), p. 103.



general and inclusive, and the vice of representation will disappear. "It is impossible," he says, "to represent human beings as selves or centres of consciousness: it is quite possible to represent (though with an element of distortion which must always be recognised) so much of human beings as they themselves put into an associated effort for a common purpose."

In view of such arguments as this we must add to the questions requiring an answer this fundamental one – whether and in what sense it is legitimate to speak of persons as represented at all.

## 3

Mill starts his discussion of the functions of Parliament from the question, "What kinds of business a numerous body is competent to perform properly." This too frequently neglected question is really the fundamental question for democratic theory. The question should not be confined to Parliament, and the word "properly" is unnecessary. It should be asked at each and every stage of delegation, the ultimate delegant being conceived as the people or general body of voters, from which in the last resort all authority is held by delegation. The word "properly" is not wanted because it tends to complicate primary with secondary issues. The first question is what such a body *can* do. What it cannot do itself it must, as Montesquieu said, arrange to have done otherwise. Thus under this head we might hope to show that certain kinds of delegation are necessary, *i.e.* are inevitable if government is to exist at all. If we ask what things such a body is



“competent to perform properly” we introduce the further question whether certain things which it can do itself would not be better done otherwise, and here we are apt to find ourselves baffled by a surd in the democrat’s belief in the intrinsic value of self-government. It is best to postpone that question, and even to assume at the start, at least for the sake of the argument, that whatever the general body can and will do for itself, it should do for itself and not delegate to the more restricted body. Some such presumption as this seems to be characteristic of the democratic attitude, and the best procedure is to accept the principle in its simplicity and see where it leads.

When I call the act by which authority is constituted an act of delegation, I only mean to assert the principle that the general social body, the community, is the source of all authority within it; that the body or person enjoying authority, however it may in fact be appointed, considers itself to be empowered finally by and responsible finally to the general body of citizens. A king, for instance, like ours, who owes his position historically to complications of tradition, conquest, and acts of Parliament, is properly conceived, not in terms of such derivation, but in his dependence on the attitude of the community in which he holds office; and it is this dependence which the word delegation is intended to mark. It will be observed, further, that much of what is most commonly called delegation is excluded by the terms of the question above propounded. Many if not most of our delegations empower other people to do things which we are legally and otherwise competent to do ourselves; but



the delegations referred to above empower the delegate to do only what the delegants themselves cannot do. In the one case, authority may correctly be said to be passed on or handed over from delegant to delegate: in the other case, it cannot be. Much confusion of thought is caused in political contexts, in which delegation is normally of this second type, by the use of terminology proper only to the first type. Thus Lord Brougham sees the essence of representation in this "that the power of the people should be parted with and given over for a limited period to the deputy chosen by the people, and that he should perform that part in the government which, but for this transfer, would have been performed by the people themselves."<sup>1</sup> This is wholly artificial. What is this power of the people, and when was it or could it be used? Plainly the institution of a Parliament is the *creation* of an authority which did not exist before.

After these preliminaries, let us now confront ourselves in thought with our problem in its simplest form. Here is this British population of about forty-eight million men, women, and children, living unevenly dispersed on its north-westerly island. What, we have to ask, can it do for itself? Its mere size dictates the answer, nothing. The members of such a multitude cannot even, except in the most confused and superficial way, become aware of the multitude of which they are members. Yet, as we know them now under government, their unity is a pretty solid fact, of some weight in the world, and expressed for themselves in a multitude of complicated activities, touching the lives of every

<sup>1</sup> *British Constitution*, p. 53.



individual inhabitant in innumerable ways; and they would tell you, if you asked them, that in the main they govern themselves, that the general distribution and character of these activities is not settled for them by benevolent outsiders, but settled by them in the light of their own wisdom and with reference to their own interests. How has this miracle happened and how is it maintained? How is this unwieldy mass, incapable in itself of any action whatever, converted into a living, active, self-organising social body?

The device on which we mainly rely for the maintenance of this standing miracle is the device of the representative assembly or Parliament. The principle of the device is simple. By division into more or less artificial smaller groups, each of which has the right of sending one or more delegates to a central assembly, the forty-eight million inhabitants (or rather the twenty-nine million adults) are induced to express themselves without remainder in a body of some six hundred persons, on which thereafter the main responsibility for all affairs of common concern rests. No one is left out: everyone has his spokesman in this general assembly. The assembly is large, but not so large that all may not be able to see and hear anyone who speaks to it, nor so large that each member may not have a reasonable chance of saying what he may wish to say. In it the multitude is incorporated, achieving unity by representation: it becomes now, though only by a fiction, a single body, a people, capable of decision and action. For the decisions of this assembly are not the decisions merely of the persons who happen at the time to be members of it; nor even merely of the body of which



they happen to be members, an ancient body, perhaps, with ancient and powerful traditions of its own. The decisions are conceived by those who take them as taken in the name and on behalf of the community as a whole, and the public outside accepts them in this sense. It is not just Parliament which so ordains, but Parliament as spokesman of the speechless multitude – Parliament, in short, in its representative character.

There are two points here to which I want specially to direct attention. First, it is fundamentally erroneous to think of a people as possessing a unity which political institutions merely express and register. There are, of course, numbers of different unifying principles at work in any given geographical area, but neither separately nor in combination will they produce political union, or determine its limits and extent. The relevant unity in every case is produced and maintained by the institutions in which we describe it as expressed. Secondly, the situation necessarily involves a fundamental fiction which no agility of metaphysical analysis and no intensity of political life can finally expel. The people of England is taken to be present in Parliament, where it is plainly not present, and the decisions of Parliament are taken as its decisions, whereas there is plainly no guarantee that anyone outside the walls of Parliament has devoted a moment's thought to the question at issue at all.

I want to say a little more about these two points, which seem to me to be fundamental. If all that happens at a general election – and in whatever other activities there may be by which Parliament is constituted and maintained – is that feelings or



thoughts or wishes or other vital phenomena already in being in the obscure masses of the population are recorded and brought to light, the result may be instructive and interesting: one can imagine, for instance, that it would be exceedingly helpful to a wise ruler with policies of his own, who wished to pursue them in ways acceptable to the population committed to his charge; but the creation of a political authority, of a body or person authorised to take decisions on behalf of the population as a whole, would not be brought any nearer. The election would not be a contribution to government as such. Actually, an election is a lively interchange, marked by give and take on both sides, between two disparate forces and activities. On the one side are governors and would-be governors with national policies which they recommend for acceptance; on the other side are the mass of the governed, willing to be governed, and choosing between these policies in the light of their needs and desires and of the pressure of daily circumstance upon them.

Consider the Parliamentary constituency, which is the basis of political organisation on a national scale. Its normal size on a basis of equal single-member constituencies is arrived at easily by dividing the total number of adult inhabitants by some such number as 600, this being about the largest practicable number for an effective deliberative assembly. For Great Britain this gives a constituency of about 50,000 men and women. This group has only so much unity, cohesion, and corporate life, as its legal function of returning a member to Parliament enables it to develop. No individual in it has more than a fraction of his attention to devote to



political issues. The summons to record a vote comes at rare intervals and takes most voters by surprise when it comes. Left to themselves, invited merely to record an opinion, these 50,000 voters, with insignificant exceptions, would be wholly at sea. Some few hopes or grievances or demands would agitate them vaguely; but, if they were stated, analysis would probably show that they largely cancelled one another out and mostly rested on demonstrable errors of fact. But the voters are not left to themselves. Devoted and enterprising agents of organised groups of would-be governors clamour for their attention, besieging their eyes and ears day and night with explanations and promises, developing the germs provided by these chaotic hopes, fears, and wishes into something resembling a coherent plan of action. And these agents have in view the whole field of political action, not merely the portion of it in which they happen to be operating. They are essentially Parliamentary groups, with programmes devised in view of Parliamentary actualities and possibilities. They are therefore compelled to work on a national basis and to frame proposals which are likely to win as much support as possible in any and every constituency.

So far as this organised collision between the Parliamentary rulers and their faithful subjects is genuine and intense, so far it is bound to be fruitful. The act of Parliament – and here I come back to the fiction of representation – the act of Parliament is the act of *Parliament* and expresses the will of Parliament, if it expresses any will. Ask a scientist, as Bishop Barnes invites us to ask a scientist about the wafer used in the Communion Service: he could



give no other answer. But yet this will, like all will, is the child of desire, and the desires on which the deliberations of Parliament turn are not those merely of its members; they are rather those of the masses whom its members represent. It is true that the desires of the mass of citizens, or of groups among them, cannot be truly said to pass into will and action through Parliament by any genuine continuous process like that by which the desire of an individual becomes eventually the principle of his action. There is a break. The decision and the first steps towards execution are freely taken by Parliament; and hence the element of fiction must always remain. It is true also that the desire and opinion to which Parliament appears to submit are evoked by the Parliament which submits to them. But if there is genuine contact between the voters and their representatives, it will be fruitful in providing material for the deliberations of Parliament; the constituencies will provide, to some extent at least, the matter to which Parliament gives political form. To the extent to which this happens, the fiction that the people is present in Parliament and that the decisions of Parliament are its decisions, ceases to be a mere fiction. In regard to major issues at least, the fiction may become merely the slight exaggeration of a fact.

The reason why I labour these points is this, that in my view the chief vice in arguments about democracy, both in those which defend and in those which decry it, is their tendency to proceed on the assumption that democracy involves complete passivity on the part of those invested with political authority. Any government of course has to govern; and in that aspect the most democratic authority



will be expected to act forcibly on those committed to its charge. But there is a tendency to assume that, if the government is genuinely and completely democratic, in such action on the governed it will be merely transmitting a force which it has received from them in their capacity of active citizens. Against such a view I argue that the activity of the citizen is not and cannot be a simple fact, existent in its own right; but that it is something requiring to be evoked; and that it cannot be evoked except by a correlative counter-activity on the part of the political authority or of those who seek to have a share in it. Democracy depends on the fruitful collision of two forces, one being of the type of a responsible public official with a policy which he wishes to recommend, the other of the type of a private citizen with domestic and other interests which he wishes to safeguard and develop. Pure receptivity on the part of the constituted authority is so far from being the ideal of democracy that it is demonstrably unattainable in a body of any considerable size, and clearly pernicious in any body small enough to make it possible.

If this contention is admitted and its significance fully appreciated, the chief practical effect would, I think, be an increased hesitation to adopt certain typically "democratic" constitutional devices, such as the election of officials by popular vote, proportional representation, the referendum and the initiative, the right of recalling the representative. I do not suggest that my argument has proved these devices to be pernicious. In its place any one of these devices may in fact be valuable. But I do claim that, in the light of my argument, most of the pleas put forward for these arrangements are shown to



be, at the very least, inconclusive, because they fail to attend to the crucial problem of democratic government, that of transforming the chaotic impulses of masses of men and women into a coherent policy of common action. This problem is not peculiar to the representative system; it exists equally in organisations in which a direct democracy is aimed at. But increased numbers make it more difficult, and the interposition of the representative body makes it more visible.

## 4

In conclusion, I come back to the representative and to the problem of his relation to the represented, which I stated at the outset. We saw that the orthodox view maintains the principle of free representation; it therefore excludes anything of the nature of binding instruction from the constituency to the representative, and it is very unsympathetic to proposals for giving constituencies the right to recall their representatives. On the other hand, in practice, Parliament tends increasingly to emphasise its dependence on public opinion, especially as expressed, or construed as expressed, at the polls. It does not claim absolute freedom: on the contrary, its organised groups "seek a mandate," as they often put it, for this or that; and a government is nettled by the taunt that it has no mandate for a major legislative proposal. Mr. Baldwin in 1923 arranged a general election with a view to securing a mandate for fiscal protection. Despondent critics see in these practical developments a slippery slope, likely to end in full surrender of the principle of free representation: they fear a future in which the prestige



and responsibility of Parliament will be destroyed, because its members will have become the mere delegates and dependants of the electors.

Opinions on both sides are advanced with some heat, but it is often hard to be sure how far the difference is merely one of interpretation and how far it is of practical significance. There was not in Burke's day in England, and there is not in our own day, any considerable body of opinion in favour of imposing any legal restrictions on the freedom of the representative. And if legal restrictions are excluded, the issue is apt to seem unreal. Hume's words, from an essay published in 1742, referring to a similar contemporary dispute, are very much to the point. "The present political controversy," he said, "with regard to instructions, is a very frivolous one, and can never be brought to any decision, as it is managed by both parties. The country-party pretend not that a member is absolutely bound to follow instructions, as an ambassador or general is confined by his orders, and that his vote is not to be received in the house, but so far as it is conformable to them. The court-party again pretend not that the sentiments of the people ought to have no weight with every member; much less that he ought to despise the sentiments of those he represents. . . . And if their sentiments be of weight, why ought they not to express these sentiments? The question then is only concerning the degree of weight which ought to be placed on instructions." He goes on to say that this is a question which in the nature of the case cannot be settled precisely, and that in a national Parliament it is further complicated by the different importance of different localities.



Totnes, as he puts it, ought not to have the same weight as London.<sup>1</sup>

All this is true and to the point. And yet I feel that the issue, in the form in which we have inherited it, is a substantial one, an issue of practical importance, on which, just because fundamental questions of interpretation are involved, political theory should be capable of throwing light. I submit the following considerations.

(1) The meaning of the term Representation has sometimes been appealed to as providing a conclusive argument for one side or the other. This it cannot do; for its necessary implication is only this: that the decisions of a small body, appointed by a great number of persons, are to be taken as equivalent to the decisions of that great number. A representative assembly is a select body which by a legal fiction stands for a whole community from which it is selected. The further implications of the term will be different in different contexts, varying according to the actual relations which obtain between the conduct of the representative body and the conduct and opinion of those whom it represents; but under the stress of the democratic demand the tendency is always for the representative body to recognise certain moral (not legal) limitations on its freedom of decision, and to claim at least a general harmony between the line of policy adopted by the representatives and the desires of the represented.

(2) While every form of government must rest ultimately on the consent of the governed, representative government is distinguished as asking for the express consent of the governed. Even if the

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, I., iv. (ed. Green and Grose, Vol. I., p. 113 n.).



voters were as inactive and unenterprising as the shareholders are in a normally successful and prosperous limited company, of whom few attend to the policy of the directors at all, yet the political governing body could at least claim with a show of justice that in each periodical reappointment they receive authority to continue in the line that they have hitherto pursued. In fact, however, attempts are energetically made, largely by means of party groupings inside the representative body, at effecting more than this. Attempts are made to offer the electors a choice between rival developments of policy; and the actual policy adopted in the name of the community not only takes its general colour from the reception of this offer, but is also continuously influenced by contemporary evidence as to the attitude of the electors to the detail of the programme as it works itself out.

(3) Such a relation between the representative body and the represented does not, as we have seen, imply passivity on the part of that body. However receptive it is to the desires and complaints of the citizens, the formulation of a national policy relative to these remains its responsibility. The private citizen may and should criticise the adequacy of the policy to the situation, but can only do so from outside, as an irresponsible layman or outsider. To such criticism, again, the representative body is sensitive. Of this also, it must take account; but it is not called on to surrender at discretion. It has to face its own responsibility and rely on its own wisdom. In the last resort the voters will, in due time, have a legal opportunity of making their resentment effective and reversing the direction of policy.



(4) Though some writers, especially in France, seem to think it possible to assert a general dependence of Parliament on public opinion, while denying any similar dependence of members of Parliament on the public opinion of their constituencies, this combination does not seem to me to represent a workable or durable political convention. A Parliament is a representative body in which every member is himself a representative, and the inevitable tendency is to construe representative in the two cases, so far as possible, in identical terms. The identity clearly can only be partial; for while it is indubitable that Parliament has the right to decide for the nation, it is far from clear that the member of Parliament has, in the same sense, the right to decide for the constituency. Parliament is a deliberative body which discusses before deciding, and its work would be stultified if its decisions were merely the registration of a number of separate decisions already taken in the constituencies. Any claim by the constituency to give its representative binding instructions is a claim to decide the national issue to the extent of its fractional power. Such a claim is proved illegitimate by the simple fact that the constituency cannot hear the voices of the other constituencies. These considerations justify the exclusion of the imperative mandate; but it is a question whether the imperative mandate should not also be excluded in considering the proper relation of Parliament as a whole to the nation generally; and in any case they do not justify us in rejecting roundly all dependence of members on their constituencies.

(5) Allowing for this fact that Parliament decides,



while the member of Parliament is merely a contributor to the decision, I should argue that the representative rôle of the member is in principle the same as the representative rôle of Parliament. For him, as for it, representation does not mean the mere expression of something already existing. What he brings to London is not a certified replica of his portion of the provinces. He went to the constituency as a responsible official, seeking support for a policy in which he believed and to which in general he was already committed. It was not his policy alone, but that of a Parliamentary group to which he belonged. His contacts with the constituency should be productive on both sides; for the voters, in transforming sporadic desires, projects, and grievances into widely accepted plans of action; for the member, in suggestions for detailed modifications and extensions of the proposed policy, and for the relative emphasis and urgency of its several items. In his constituency the member proves his representative character by seeking the fullest contact with it and evoking the maximum activity from it, by patience in listening to all sections of opinion, and ingenuity in devising means of satisfying them. In Parliament he proves it, by making the most of the fiction that in his person the constituency is present, by placing the material he has there collected at the disposal of the national council, together with his suggestions as to the best way of dealing with it. He may voice his constituents' desires, though he does not vote at their order.

(6) The proper fulfilment of this rôle by the individual member, as by Parliament generally, requires, I believe, a high degree of legal freedom.



General elections at intervals of one year would, for example, be fatal to its proper discharge: the interval must be sufficient to give a policy a chance of working itself out in some detail, but also not so great that the country feels impotent against a majority in Parliament and goes to sleep between elections. Provision for elections at maximum intervals of three to five years is in these circumstances the natural provision, on which most modern constitutions agree. England is probably wise in refusing to qualify the freedom of Parliament and its members by providing for the referendum or the recall or for dissolution of Parliament on popular petition. But in giving the voter only the right of declaring a preference as between candidates once in five years, or possibly rather more often, English practice gives the citizen more restricted opportunities of overt action than any modern constitution, even that of France, gives him. France at least guarantees an election once in four years.

(7) This legal freedom is necessary as the formal declaration of the full responsibility of Parliament and its members for national decisions. In accepting limitations on the use of this freedom, as by the mandate doctrine discussed earlier, Parliament does not and cannot divest itself of its responsibility. Limitations of this kind the individual member accepts in two main forms. First, there are the pledges he has himself given at the time of his election, which form, as it were, in his mind the terms of his appointment. Secondly, there are the influences which reach him during his membership of Parliament and his reactions to them, out of



which occasionally new or qualifying obligations arise. Of these two kinds of commitment, the former, the electoral pledge, is far the more prominent and familiar. Its nature has been a good deal discussed, and critics have often pointed out its dangers. When Francis Place demanded pledges of the candidates at Westminster in the first election after the Reform Act of 1832, the Radical candidates, Burdett and Hobhouse, replied that "none but fools demanded pledges and none but knaves gave them." J. S. Mill, as a candidate for Parliament in 1865, refused to give any pledge, except to follow generally the policy of which he submitted an outline. This may be an impracticably heroic course of action, but it seems to be correct in principle. When the interest in proceedings in Parliament is genuine and widespread, contemporary influences giving rise to obligations of the second type tend to encroach upon, and even at times to overshadow, those arising from the electoral pledge. And this is probably a development to be welcomed. For though it is clearly necessary that a politician shall declare in advance the line of policy which he proposes to follow, and though it is right that he should regard himself as morally bound to act in the sense of that declaration, it is also essential that Parliament should preserve its freedom to deal with emergencies as they arise. The principle of democracy refutes itself if it asks Parliament to act with reference to the situation as it was at the time of the last election and not as it is to-day; and representation refutes itself if it excludes all influence on government policy except what can be forced through the narrow passage of the ballot box.



Finally, in answer to those who object to representation on principle, or who, like Mr. Cole, see a fundamental vice in general political representation, I would say this. I would ask them whether they are not forcing on to the word some predetermined meaning and then condemning the facts because they do not conform to this. Representation is a political device, and the main evidence for what it can do is what it does. We have no business to force an analogy with artistic representation, and on that ground claim that its essential aim and test must be the degree of resemblance between the representative and the represented bodies. Equally groundless is the appeal to map-making, or cartographical representation, which assures us that the House of Commons is intended to be a map of the country on the scale 1 : 50,000. Mr. Cole's argument seems to rest on some such unavowed preconception of the meaning of the term. "To represent me," means only in this connection to take political decisions with my express authorisation in my behalf, with the further complications that I am only a fractional part of the represented, that he is only a fractional part of that which decides, and that the overriding problem, to which all else is or should be subordinated, is the problem of creating by means of such authorisation a democratic political authority, strong and flexible, and infinitely responsive to the hopes and fears of those subject to it. It is no doubt arguable that the responsibilities of Parliaments are too wide, that some subdivision may be advisable; but I cannot see that experience justifies the assertion that representation is in fact more effective in organisations, such as trade unions, in which common



concerns are more narrowly limited. In any case, there must be some ultimate power of decision in any community, which must operate on the widest possible reference; and a parliament of representatives elected on a geographical basis is in this present age the generally accepted device for this purpose. The nature and purpose of this device has been my subject in this paper. I do not claim that the device is the last word of human wisdom; only that there is nothing impossible in its aims and nothing unsound in its conception, if these are properly understood.



## VI

### ON BEING LOGICAL<sup>1</sup>

#### I

It is difficult for a philosopher to contemplate with equanimity the fate which is overtaking, if it has not already overtaken, the word "logical." "Logical" is one of a trio of words selected by the Greeks to represent the three main departments of philosophy; and of this trio the other two members, the words "ethical" and "physical," have at least remained respectable; and to be called "philosophical" is almost a compliment. But to be logical is apparently, at least in England, to enter on very questionable courses: it is to class yourself with every reckless extremist, with the latest and wildest *ism* in art, politics, and literature, with Russians and Frenchmen and the "Latin mind." No less a person than H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on no less an occasion than an Assembly of the League of Nations, has lately proclaimed proudly to the gathered nations that lack of logic is the special virtue and privilege of the British Empire. The "lesser breeds *within* the law" heard no doubt and trembled, wondering how they could ever compete with a Power to which the laws of thought themselves were mere expediencies. Thus it appears, if Sir Austen Chamberlain is right, that to be logical is to fall into a human weakness or vice, and that this weakness or vice is fortunately commoner outside

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, July, 1926.



than inside the British Empire. So far no action has been taken, even in England, against teachers of logic, whose professional duty it would appear to be to encourage this vice. The Home Office is no doubt considering the matter. In the meantime, lest judgment should go by default, it is advisable that someone should come forward to champion this much abused word, and to maintain, modestly but firmly, that to be logical is not to be vicious or even imprudent; that, on the contrary, it is better and wiser and safer to be logical than not to be logical, both in matters of theory and in matters of practice. Or, if it is not possible to go quite so far as that, at least some slight effort would seem to be needed to explain to the League of Nations what an Englishman means by being logical, and why he dislikes or fears it so much.

When a discourse or proposal is said to be logical, that does not, of course, mean that it presupposes any knowledge of logic. The connection with logic is rather that the discourse or proposal is strongly marked by those features which form the special subject-matter of logic; and it would appear that these may be summed up in the two phrases, consistency of thought and cogency of reasoning. Thus extremists tend to be called logical in contrast with sympathisers of less extreme views, because of their superficial consistency. They are men of one idea. They have a single principle. Whatever question is asked, whatever practical problem is suggested, they have no answer but to state this principle afresh. Their consistency is thus obvious and beyond question, and the world applauds it, however much it may dislike the principle (applauds it, in fact, the more warmly, the more it dislikes the principle), and



compares them unfavourably with those who profess allegiance to this same principle, but complicate the question and qualify the result by bringing in other principles as also deserving of attention. Here the emphasis is rather on consistency than cogency of reasoning, but cogency is, of course, implied. The attitude is one of rigorous insistence on certain principles, resolutely faced in all their consequences, however absurd or revolting these may seem, when stated, to normal humanity. "Democracy," says Mommsen, "has always destroyed herself by her insistence on carrying out her principle to its farthest consequences."

The attitude is found and blamed not only in matters of practice, where it is sometimes represented as the vice of the theorist among men of action, but also in theoretical enterprises like science and philosophy. Here also, it seems, one may be too logical or too purely logical; a principle may be pushed too far. Hobbes is described by Mill as "one of the clearest and most consecutive thinkers whom this country or the world has produced," and when modern writers attempt to characterise Hobbes the word logical is never far away. Theorists, of course, are not so ready to use the term logical as a term of abuse as practical men are; and Mill's remark about Hobbes is not intended as other than a compliment. But there are, nevertheless, disquieting features in this estimate of Hobbes, especially this, that the feature singled out in such estimates is as much, if not more, the characteristic weakness of his method as its characteristic strength. Hobbes is, in fact, not exceptionally free from inconsistencies, as soon as one penetrates a little below the surface. On the



other hand, he loves to operate where he can with a single principle, and his show of argument is largely a cloak for the reassertion in various forms of this one principle. This gives Hobbes, as it gives every extremist, an appearance of lucidity and consistency, but it involves necessarily an artificial simplification of the question at issue, and this must on the whole lessen rather than enhance the value of his contribution to its solution. Those who adopt a narrow theoretical basis for their constructions set themselves no doubt a simpler exercise in the art of thinking than those who lay their foundation on more generous lines; and the uninstructed reader may well be more impressed with the symmetry and coherence of their results. But I see no reason why the instructed should concur in this hasty judgment. Locke is an author who, I think, has never been either praised or blamed as logical. Yet in the proper sense of the word I would venture to maintain that Locke's *Civil Government* is not only a truer but also a more logical account of government than Hobbes's *Leviathan*. It is not only more credible; it is also more coherent. But whether this view is right or wrong does not at present matter. It is sufficient to note that in Hobbes and Locke we are asked to see two opposed types of theorist, the one extremely logical, issuing in brilliant but unreliable paradox, the other sensible, moderate, persuasive, but not a model of logic.

One would like to know what the alternative is to being logical, what that is which is preferred to logic, in cases in which logic is condemned. Sir Austen Chamberlain would probably not maintain that it is a merit at times to be illogical, to think inconsistently,



or to offer arguments which have no appearance of cogency. Nor would he merely say, after R. L. Stevenson, "Some like to think, Some not." It is probable that he thinks of logical thinking as a special kind of thinking, a process generating new assertions, not out of a renewed inspection of the facts, but out of other assertions, which themselves, at long or short remove, spring from such inspection. A logical person probably means to him a person skilful in this operation; and a logical proposal will be a proposal which justifies itself on such grounds. *Qua* logical, it will justify itself, not by its adequacy to meet a given emergency, but by its consonance with the general tendency of action previously adopted or principle previously professed. If this is right, the alternative to logical thinking might be described as observational thinking. It is implicitly claimed for it that it escapes the jurisdiction of logic. The other is subject to strict laws which the logician can detect and expound; but this is anarchic or autonomous. In the former, thought seems to make the bold claim that it can by a spontaneous activity originate truth; in the latter, more modestly, it submits to external control. It may be that when we speak thus, as it were, in the presence of the object, we are unable, as philosophers say, to confine ourselves strictly within the limits of the evidence: still we are face to face with the facts, and we are open all the time to fresh evidence. Each case is taken on its merits, and the issue is not prejudged. In so proceeding, we have not primarily in mind the relation of what we are now doing or saying to what we did or said before: we rely on the facts to keep us straight. We do not court inconsistency or praise



inconsistency; but it may not be easy at any given moment to rebut the charge of inconsistency.

Thus there is Scylla, and there is Charybdis. Scylla is incoherence between one's own successive deliverances, rising at the worst to flat self-contradiction; Charybdis is inadequacy to a complex situation, which has been prejudged on insufficient evidence or distorted in the interest of a theory. Foreigners, especially Latins, fear and hate Scylla most; but the duty of an Englishman, if Sir Austen Chamberlain is right, is at all costs to avoid Charybdis.

## 2

I do not propose at present to discuss this anti-thesis. It may be that as formulated it would not survive close analysis. Still, we all know that there is something in it, and though we may laugh at the Foreign Secretary, we must all be conscious, if we are honest, of using the word logical not infrequently with some such implication. It seems to me at least probable that the degradation of the word, against which I am protesting, is no mere caprice of common sense, nor wholly attributable to the traditional English suspicion of "metaphysics," but is due in part at least to the behaviour of philosophers. It happens that logic has been for many centuries the branch of philosophy with which the general public was best acquainted. Fifteen hundred years ago a Christian saint is said to have proposed the addition to the Litany of the petition – "from the Logic of Aristotle, deliver us, good Lord." Would St. Ambrose have been more friendly to the subject if he had been obliged to study Jevons or Joseph for a



degree? I see no reason to think so. If, then, the verdict of our ancestors, as embodied in our speech, is unfavourable to logic, we cannot plead that the logician has not had the opportunity of giving evidence in his own defence.

From the material adduced, therefore, I would extract an attack on the logician, which would run somewhat as follows :

“We take it that your professed subject is thought. You undertake to explain to your hearers the nature of thought, and by calling yourselves philosophers you suggest further that you have the hope or intention of illuminating by that analysis the ultimate nature of things. We have heard philosophers say that thought, in the sense in which they give an account of it, is to be distinguished from sensation; and if that is your view, we are quite prepared to regard sensation as an external condition of thinking, and to excuse you from giving an account of it. Nor are we so misguided as to suppose, like some aspirants to philosophy that we have known, that in logic we shall find the clue to all truth and knowledge. This again we do not ask. Obviously there is much that you cannot tell us about thought. Your analysis cannot be expected to tell us what to think about, where evidence is to be found, what problems are most likely to be solved, or how much of what commonly passes for true deserves acceptance. We entirely understand and accept your unwillingness to claim for your reflections any value whatever, except for such as may wish to know the truth about thought. Let the enquiry, if you wish, be purely theoretical. But, even on this footing, we complain that logic does not give us what it sets out to give. If it told us



what thought is, it would tell us what it is to be thoughtful. But it doesn't. At most it tells us what it is to be logical. In the difference between those two words you have a measure of the failure of logic. Granting that the living individuality of thought, in its triumphant exercise in any particular field, must elude logic, as individuality always eludes scientific treatment, yet there would seem to be formal and general characters of thought on which its success depends, of which logic gives no account, or at least none that has reached the general ear. This operation of extracting further truth from truth already agreed on and possessed plays a comparatively insignificant rôle in the general effort to attain and maintain truth. Most of the energy used is spent in other ways – especially in building up out of fragments a whole and reinterpreting the parts in the light of the whole thus formed, in attempting so to operate with a number of apparently independent and divergent principles that each has its due weight and no more, and the whole eventually is seen to be enriched and strengthened by their divergence. Yet of all this, the main task of thought, logic seems to take no account, lavishing all its care and ingenuity on the relatively rare and unimportant factor of necessary implication and formal inference. That is why to be logical is at best the least of virtues in a thinker and may in certain contexts, pardonably, though inaccurately, be described as a fault. We complain that logic, as practised by philosophers, has brought this fate upon itself by concentrating on one feature of thinking to the exclusion of others far more important."

Such a criticism might be met in several different



ways. Thinking, it might be said, is an exercise which, like other exercises, football or painting or public speaking, requires and tends to develop a certain specialised form of skill. In all such cases theoretical analysis yields very poor results. Not only does the individuality of the individual act escape it, as it must, but even its universal character and the general conditions of its success seem to elude us. Such skilled practice tends to exhibit in its more outward and mechanical aspects certain uniformities, on which some elementary rules of technique may be based. But even these have no very assured status. And as soon as we rise above this low and elementary level, we find ourselves falling back for educational purposes on the practice of the art, with attention to the examples afforded by the masters in it; and on the theoretical side (if the art is important enough to receive theoretical treatment) we have to content ourselves with general theorems as to the nature of the beautiful, or whatever else it may be that the skill considered attains or produces. Applying this to the special case of thinking, we might expect to find two possible kinds of treatment. First, the technique of thought should yield some results to analysis. To a limited extent we should expect to be able to exhibit the means by which success in thinking is achieved. But we should not expect to be in a position to claim universal validity for our results, or to dictate to future practitioners. And there seems to be no obvious reason, on the face of it, why this analysis or its results should have any closer relation to philosophy than a painters' handbook has or a Berlitz guide to the French language. Secondly, we should expect to find some treatment of that at



which thinking aims and in which the thinker rests satisfied, *viz.* truth or knowledge. And here we come to something that may properly engage the interest and attention of philosophy.

The advocate for the defence might go on to point out that, in fact, logic has not always been conceived as a branch of philosophy; that for most of the time during which it has existed as a separate study it has been mainly conceived as a technical analysis, directed partly at least to improving the practice of the art, and owing its place in the educational curriculum mainly to this supposed function; that the present use of the word logical is no doubt largely influenced by this history; and that in other arts there are virtues of conventional correctness related to the practice of the art in much the same fashion that logicality is related to the art of thinking. Having adopted this line and reached this point, he will find himself driven to admit that the historical facts referred to have not merely influenced the reputation of logic: they have also influenced and still influence its practice and performance. With this admission he comes on to a slippery slope which he may have to descend farther and faster than he wishes. If on behalf of philosophy he rejects the notion of a technical discipline altogether, how much of our present logic does he hope to retain? The special emphasis on inference in the traditional scheme is clearly derived from this conception of the subject. But syllogistic inference was the centre on which the rest turned; and if it is to leave the centre, most of the rest will need to be fundamentally recast. When Mill supplemented or replaced syllogism by induction, he had, as his own treatise frankly proclaims, no



other view of logic than this: he thought logic existed in order to teach men how to prove and infer. He did not consider the question whether an enquiry with such an aim was rightly reckoned a part of philosophy. As for the view, still I understand widely supported in Germany, that logic is a normative science, it seems to me to be nothing but the technical discipline theory under a new name, and I could wish that those who profess it might be set, as a punishment, to construct a normative science of painting or poetry. It is significant also that those who in writing under the title Logic are most anxious to retain a philosophical point of view, either show plainly by their treatment that they attach little importance to the subject of inference, or else refuse to treat it *eo nomine* at all. Naturally enough their contact with the tradition is in general rather perfunctory and external, and reminds one at times of the contact of some sermons with the Biblical text from which custom bids them take their departure. The defence, then, will be seriously compromised in its own household. Sir William Hamilton had a theory of logic which led him to say that "nine-tenths, indeed more than nineteen-twentieths," of Aristotle's logical writings did not deal with logic at all. It seems that our advocate for the defence, if he rejects the technical discipline notion altogether, will be led into a position almost as extreme.

3

But if this notion is rejected, and if most of the tradition is rejected with it, what is left for philosophy as its proper task under the name of logic? It was suggested previously that, if thinking was like other



skilled occupations, philosophy might find a legitimate exercise in scrutinising truth or knowledge, these being the characteristic products of the occupation in question. Even if it failed to determine the conditions of success in this occupation, or refused to take any interest in them, philosophy might still, we thought, in this sense render an account of it. This alternative view, however, is also not free from difficulty. What is the product of thinking? Of course, there are books: and some books might be so described. But yet, if they are products, they also are (or symbolise) processes of thinking. The investigation of the symbolism employed belongs to grammar and linguistic study, which do not claim any philosophical character and are not commonly practised by philosophers. But if this side of the matter is ruled out, the study of the product seems to become identical with the study of the process; and it was the apparent impossibility of fruitful analysis of the process which led to the rejection of the technical discipline view.

To this it may be replied that, though in thinking there is not properly a product distinct from the process, yet the process-character may nevertheless be distinguishable from the product-character of thought and capable of separate treatment. One may compare the performance of a piece of music by an orchestra. An attempt might be made to find the law of the movements of the various performers with their different instruments; and this might lead to an understanding of the skill possessed by the instrumentalists, or of the principles according to which a given effect is produced. Or, on the other hand, one might study the character of the piece as



played, which has a unity in its temporal succession. On such a basis one might build a theory of music: not an account of how it is or should be played, nor of how it is or should be composed, but simply of what it is, the skill of composer and instrumentalist being not otherwise defined than as the ability to produce that. Similarly, in thought, the enquiry (one might say) must start, not from the human mind, regarded as an instrument by and in which truth is to be generated, in the hope of discovering the conditions of its generation and the nature of the skill required for generating it, but from typical instances of what passes for truth, in the hope of discovering what truth and knowledge in their general nature are. In both attitudes the complex character of thinking as process-product will be accepted and recognised; but in one the detail of the exposition will be concerned with its generating conditions, in the other with its constitutive features. The latter, it is suggested, is the proper field of philosophic logic.

Before we accept this, we must ask a further question. We must ask to be told what precisely is covered by the high-sounding phrase "constitutive features." It is agreed that there is a process called thinking, and that in this process, properly conducted, we are progressively aware of a reality which includes thinking. And we may take it also to be agreed that thinking is not a substitute for something else (say, perception), which if we could always get we should always prefer to thinking, a second best by which we cover, as best we can, the gaps in our perception and transcend its limits: not that, but rather a name for the only way in which we are aware of reality at all. We must then ask, Are these "constitutive



features," which a philosophical logic is to reveal, the laws of the structure of the real as revealed in thought? and if not, what are they? This question has to be put and met in view of a suggested dilemma: if the former answer is given, we have abolished logic in favour of metaphysics, and if the other line is adopted, we shall find ourselves back again in an empirical analysis of thought processes which has as such no special interest for philosophy.

To this question I see two main lines of answer, of which the first is open to all schools of philosophy whatever. The second, however, and more far-reaching, seems to involve a distinctively idealist position.

In the first place, it seems perfectly clear that there is much to be said about thought as an apprehension of reality which does not belong to grammar or biography or history, and probably not to psychology either. Thought is, no doubt, wholly filled with fact, so that if the fact is taken away nothing is left. On this, in thinking, the mind is wholly concentrated. But the thinking is nevertheless also a voluntary activity, sustained over a certain stretch of time, an activity which has its own sequence and order, its own methods of procedure, influenced but not determined by the voluntarily selected object. Thought is thus in every moment of its existence both determined and free. But it is itself immediately and directly conscious, not of its freedom, but of its determination. (In this, as in other relations, volition appears as its diametrical opposite, claiming its freedom but not admitting its determination.) Thought proceeds in its own way, but is not conscious, except fitfully and abnormally, of its procedure. There is room, then, for an enquiry that shall expound the



law of thought's freedom. And there seems to be no reason why such an enquiry should be empirical in any damaging sense of the word. Of course, an empirical survey is conceivable, and some logicians have wished, like Windelband, to preface their philosophical treatment by such a survey; but I do not know that they have had much success with this idea. But the essential task is to fix and define the *act* of thought; and for that task empirical methods as generally understood are, at least by themselves, wholly inadequate.

I would answer, then, first, that a philosophical study of thought, distinct in its aim and method from metaphysics, is quite conceivable, however seriously we may doubt whether logic as we know it satisfies our idea of such a study. Thus *prima facie* there is room for a philosophical treatment of thought. But to complete the answer some idea is needed of the place of this study in the philosophical venture or system as a whole. Here the various schools of philosophy fall violently asunder. In general the idealist will be inclined to hope much more from such a logic than the realist. He would try to show that for a study so conceived yet higher claims can reasonably be made: that logic in this sense might be, and perhaps ought to be, not merely a part of philosophy, but the basis of all philosophy; so that if there is any danger of removing the distinction between logic and metaphysics, it will be rather metaphysics that is swallowed up in logic than logic in metaphysics.

## 4

Let me now try to make good this second point.

In the act of thought the mind is aware of a real that includes itself. Take the special case of seeing.



In seeing, there is much of one's own body that one does not see; and when you put yourself into your picture of things, you put yourself in, not as you see yourself, but as someone else might see you. What we do see is seen in such a way as to leave room for that which we do not and cannot see; and in various ways the seen is induced to yield evidence as to the unseen. Indirectly we thus discover what the things we do not see would look like if we saw them. Similarly, for thought generally the mind which thinks is not present, is not in mind. What is in mind is a world characterised in its own terms, of which thinking is not one. But in virtue of a general postulate or principle of unity and system, by which there cannot be more worlds than one, we must needs take this world for all that there is. Being conscious, therefore, that we are thinking, we suppose that somewhere within it we shall eventually find thinking and mind. But as in the visible order any evidence we can find of the nature of the unseen will be evidence as to its visual nature, so of the world of thought generally we may say that any evidence found as to the nature of mind and thought will yield a description of these in terms current in that world. We feel that our world will be incomplete until we get mind in. Plainly what we want to complete it is a characterisation of mind as one among other objects of experience. It is difficult to see how such a description could be secured; but it is almost certain that any honest attempt to frame one will have to treat mind primarily not as that which thinks but as that which wills and acts. Berkeley's arguments for the existence of finite spirits make no direct attempt to prove the existence of thinkers or contemplators of ideas; they refer



primarily to agents or creators of ideas. He thus confesses, in effect, that if spirits are taken as thinkers, if their *esse* is *percipere*, he knows of no spirit other than himself. But whether the description must start from action or not, it is anyhow certain that when it is given it will describe mind not as experiencing but as experienced. And as experienced, mind will inevitably appear as a quite subordinate feature in a complex, seen as dependent on the other features and on the general plan, possessed of no more freedom or initiative than the rest.

Such is the world and such is mind to man's innocence, in the uncorrected objectivism of the normal and natural outlook which common sense and hard practical necessity forces upon all of us for most of our waking life. If we stop at this, we may indeed attain science, we may attempt with success to correlate the sciences into something which we call metaphysics or philosophy, we may find mind its place in nature, we may detect in speech and writing certain recurrent patterns, and so construct something as worthy of the name of logic as much that passes under that name to-day. We may do all this and more in the natural piety of our innocence: but when it is all done, we shall find that we have after all attained no logic, no ethics, no æsthetic, no philosophy. These are not reached by going on, but by turning back. For them it is necessary to cultivate deliberately and persistently the attitude of reflection, which in practical matters is an intermittent and sometimes an expensive luxury. As reflective, the mind is conscious of itself in its creative activity and self-expression. In self-consciousness the subject, the *experiencer*, is revealed.



“Good,” says the man of innocence, “if you are right about reflection, I shall be able to get from it just what I wanted to complete my map of the world. I shall be able to fill up that blind spot that has sometimes troubled me, the place where *I* stand. I can now supplement what I know things to be with what I know I am: and the supplement ought really to be superior to the rest of the account, because in it I shall have the advantage of inside knowledge.”

But here innocence is misled by the deceitful term “self-consciousness.” If it were what it looks like, *viz.* an awareness of the self which is aware of things, in distinction from the things of which it is aware, then it might perhaps give him what he wants. It would give him a description of a new type of thing, namely a self. All he need then do would be to specify the relation, *viz.* awareness, holding between this new entity and those previously disclosed, and then add it to his map. But if he tries to proceed in this way, on the assumption that self-consciousness is of this nature, he will find himself doubly baffled. First, by observing that awareness is a unique relation holding between this new thing and every thing on the map, including the new-comer itself, and thus for map-making no relation at all; secondly, by discovering, when he tried to describe the self, that the description consists wholly of the item that it is one term in this relation of awareness. The data afforded by reflection or self-consciousness will not mix with the data of common sense in this way, in the way in which the data of one sense supplement those of another. And there innocence may be left.

The reason is that the consciousness of self is a



consciousness of self *in its activity*. Hence in reflection we do not lose or destroy the outlook of common sense. Retaining it, we merely introduce a further complication by becoming conscious of what it is. Mere common sense or innocency sees its world; reflection sees common sense and its world, and the one as expressed in the other. Reflection has no desire and no title to interfere with the operations of common sense or to criticise its findings. Their adequacy or inadequacy for their own defined purposes is a matter for common sense itself. Reflection is interested in the enterprise as a whole, and in all its parts, as an exercise of spiritual activity and self-expression. It follows that, in the reflective or philosophical attitude, questions may be asked about any feature of the common-sense world which in respect of verbal formulation are identical with questions raised in the attitude of common sense. For example, both the scientist and the philosopher may ask the question, What is colour? In this question they refer to the same place on the map, but they mean nevertheless different things by the question. The philosophic question remains to be asked when the scientific question has been answered, and concerns the nature of the activity which is an experiencing of colour as defined. And, indeed, whatever question the philosopher asks, it will always be one that common sense thinks it has answered, or, if not, one that it has, as it supposes, only failed to answer because it was not worth asking. For the questions will concern experience, and there is no store of inner experience distinct from outer experience on which the philosopher can draw. Even mind and thought and art and poetry belong in some sense to the public



world, and have their place in the "catalogue of common things."

But if philosophy belongs to reflection in this sense, we seem to be driven to the conclusion that all philosophical questions are logical questions, and logic threatens to become not a part but the whole of philosophy. All philosophy will be an analysis of the product of the mind's activity – for so it seems we are now to regard the world of common sense – and all philosophy will therefore be in the end an analysis of mind. Well, I admit that this is the conclusion to which I am driven. Only so far as mind is wider than thought is philosophy wider than logic, and in any case the nature of the act of thought will remain, so far as I can see, the central and most urgent preoccupation of philosophy. There is no escape from logic or the theory of knowledge except by escaping from philosophy altogether; and there is no philosophy of art or conduct which does not depend fundamentally on an attitude to the problems grouped under these heads.

This, then, is my rough sketch of an answer to the question, In what sense is an analysis of thought a proper and practicable undertaking for a philosopher? It is proper and practicable (so far as any philosophy is practicable) in the form of critical reflection, working over the whole field of human experience, taking that experience for what it is and leaving its values undisturbed, but enriching and illuminating that experience, in which mind is a featureless negation wholly determined by its object, by exhibiting this very determination as the positive self-fulfilment of a free activity. And this enterprise will necessarily be, if not the whole, at least the centre



and kernel of the philosophic enterprise generally. Thus philosophy, we may add, completes human knowledge in the sense in which the city of Aristotle completed human life. He did not suppose that it made man perfect, but it made man perfectible: in it for the first time the formal conditions of a perfect life were fulfilled. In the same way philosophy completes in principle the structure of human thought and knowledge. Its voice may be weak and its words halting, but for all that it has the last word.

Now it remains for me, with this answer in my hand, to return to Sir Austen Chamberlain, and the Assembly of the League of Nations. They are waiting, no doubt, to hear what it is to be logical. But the answer is perhaps little less difficult than it was at the beginning. We can tell them that logic is not, or ought not to be, specially interested in the things which the British Foreign Secretary chiefly supposes to interest it. It is not specially concerned with consistency: it has no partiality for extremists. It has no general preference for the *a priori* over the *a posteriori*. On the other hand, we shall have to admit that, as matters stand, there was some excuse for his impression to the contrary; and that the logic which we defend is not even now the logic most widely studied in our academies. And so in conclusion all we can do is, while disclaiming on behalf of philosophy all pretensions to legislate in matters of linguistic usage, to beg the assembled nations not to follow the English example, but to do philosophers the kindness of assuming that whenever men are thinking soundly and sensibly they are also thinking logically.



## VII

### THE UNITY OF THOUGHT<sup>1</sup>

#### I

THE unity of thought is, perhaps, an ambiguous phrase. It is certainly a theme which has been treated from a number of different angles. Historically, it first received treatment from logicians as a problem of determining the forms of thought, conceived in a way which is still generally regarded as the distinctively logical attitude to the question. Thought is shown to be one as repeating everywhere in the various fields of its exercise a comparatively small stock or store of forms. Assertion is analysed into subject and predicate; its varieties – categorical, hypothetical, universal, particular, and so on – are determined; kinds of subject and kinds of predicate are distinguished; the different possible relations of subject to predicate are explored. Then the more complex types of assertion called inferences are passed in review; and these are shown perhaps to depend on a single dominating type or form; thus arose the theory of the syllogism and syllogistic demonstration. On such lines as these, logic early made rapid progress, and its precocious maturity in the pages of Aristotle still evokes surprised admiration from the modern student. He may well see errors and shortcomings in the Aristotelian treatment, but on this side he will probably feel

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, December 14th, 1925.



that modern logic has made no decisive advance.

This unity of form in the diverse manifestations of thought may be called the *Formal or Analytic Unity of Thought*. A parallel may perhaps be found in Aristotle's great biological treatises. In the treatises on the *Parts of Animals* and on the *Movement of Animals*, he attempted a similar service for the animal kingdom, showing how "Nature" works everywhere on the same lines, and how movements and structures which to the first view have little or no resemblance are yet, in principle, identical. But in biology, Aristotle also undertook the complementary task of exploring the varieties of animal life, and of showing how, by their differences, the various species supplement one another and all together build up a system or kingdom. Some such complementary effort seems to be required equally in the study of thought – a treatment which will follow thought into the different spheres of its activity, which will justify the dispersion and specialisation by exhibiting each special function as the indispensable component of a whole or system wider than itself.

Greek thought gives us hardly the beginnings of any such enquiry. Though Aristotle ranged widely in his treatment of human nature and everywhere regarded thought as central; though he reviewed not merely science and philosophy, but also rhetoric and poetry, ethics and politics; yet he made no very determined or consistent effort to exhibit each of these as an integral part of a whole. He did, no doubt, develop certain leading ideas which implied at some points a pretty definite relation between two or more of these activities; but he never faced



directly the general underlying problem, nor did he even state it in general terms. It is not until quite modern times that attempts have been made to determine the unity of thought in this sense, in Germany, by Hegel and the German idealists, and in other countries under their influence. In our own times, the Italian idealists have handled this theme with admirable dexterity; it constitutes perhaps the central feature of Croce's system. Mr. Collingwood's recent *Speculum Mentis* is an able and fascinating continuation of this tradition.

This may be called the *Systematic or Synthetic* treatment of the unity of thought.

In these two cases philosophy is engaged in exhibiting the underlying unity of things that are, on the face of it, quite different and distinct. It is convicting thought of a unity of which it is not, and need not be, aware. They have also this in common, that the unity which each seeks to discover and exhibit has no special reference to time: on the face of it these may be called timeless or static unities. But there is also a unity which thought claims and of which it is conscious; and this unity has primary reference to time. Unity in this sense is maintained when a discussion or description is continued without interruption. It is claimed in most cases for a book by its title. It is broken when we are conscious of "changing the subject" of conversation. It is expressly disclaimed for a book when it is described as a collection of short stories, or given such a title as "Essays and Reviews." Obviously such unity has its varieties and degrees. The treatment may be loose and discursive, or compactly argumentative.



A narrative has one kind of unity, and a theoretical disquisition another. A biography guarantees to include anything of importance that befell its subject as he moved about the world. A history excludes nothing significant that falls within certain limits of space and time. And so on. But every discourse, whatever its subject and character, claims unity, and, so far as it is successful, achieves it. And the unity which it claims and achieves is something more than mere continuity. For it is evident that a series of statements may be continuous, in the sense that each is in effective contact with its neighbour on each side, without possessing unity in the sense intended. We may say perhaps, after Aristotle, that a beginning, a middle, and an end are elementary requisites. But though continuity is not the whole matter, it is a very important ingredient. Unity in this sense involves continuity and presupposes *duration* as a fundamental feature of thought.

It is the unity of thought in this last sense with which I propose to deal in this paper. I would call it, in contrast to both of the two kinds of unity described above, the *Conscious or Dynamic* Unity of Thought.

## 2

Thought in its more elaborate forms is met chiefly in books. And in books we see words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, lying side by side. The time-factor seems absent. The problem of the relation of one part to another seems as simple as the problem of determining the distance of one place from another on the ground. We are apt to forget that this spatial relation between words and sentences is only



the symbol of the temporal relation between successive phases of a continuous act or process of thinking; and that the temporal sequence itself is not ultimate, but depends upon certain logical relations which it at once masks and reveals. Thought is movement, and movement takes time; and though the real with which thought is preoccupied may itself be involved in time and change, yet thought does not depend for its success on repeating or reflecting in its own movement and duration the movement and duration of its object. The thinking has its own pace, phases, and development, which are not those of its object, even though they depend partly – even perhaps in a sense wholly – on them. Familiarity with the written word makes us forget all this. When those of us who are unmusical look at a musical score, we see it only as a cunning device for transmitting the commands of an architect in sound to willing executants; we know that for us at least it is dead and silent until these commands are carried out. We are not tempted to think of the beginning as contemporaneous with the end, or of the time occupied by the performance as an extraneous and accidental factor. Those who read scores as we read books perhaps think differently. But we are all familiar in this way with books. And our familiarity with books tends to make us forget that in the written word we have similarly only the lifeless symbol of the living thought, and that the living thought is essentially a process, a movement.

There is another illusion, not less fatal, which the printed page tends to encourage. A book consists of complexes of words called sentences, neatly separated by small black dots from one another. We



are tempted to see in this method of exhibition a not inadequate symbol of the real texture of thought. Thought consists, we say, of assertions: or we borrow a phrase from our memories of elementary logic and call the proposition or judgment the "unit of thought." As walking involves a series of steps, each clear and well-defined to the view, and on any given walk it would be possible to say precisely how many steps we had taken, so thinking is a succession of assertions, which can be separated and counted and catalogued. Within the single assertion or proposition the time-element is regarded as wholly absent; and thus somehow a complex which takes time is regarded as made up of units which are timeless. But in truth this single assertion or simple proposition is little more than a myth. There is no significant statement within which a plurality of assertions cannot be distinguished; and in many important statements the most contentious feature (*i.e.* the logically central feature) is an adverb, a preposition, or a mere emphasis, which does not look like an assertion at all. Thought is, in fact, continuous assertion, in which steps and stages are only discriminated somewhat roughly and arbitrarily by a convenient fiction, with the help of established linguistic forms. There is, therefore, no unit of thought: for thought is an infinitely divisible continuum. Thought is judgment rather than judgments, assertion rather than assertions. In fact, to speak of *a* judgment, *an* assertion at all is misleading unless it is remembered that what logic thus isolates is only a relatively substantial feature of such a continuum, never a completely self-contained entity, and that the time-factor is an essential ingredient of it.



The series of statements, then, which constitutes a book symbolises, and so far as it is successful, enables the reader to recreate for himself, a continuous and uninterrupted movement of thought. But its continuity is only one side of its unity. A book is commonly said to have a single subject. The *Origin of Species* and the *Wealth of Nations* justify their titles and maintain their unity, so far as the movement as a whole and in every changing phase has constant reference to a single problem. The use of the word "subject" implies that the book, as a whole, may be regarded as a single assertion or judgment in which a highly complex predicate is created and exhibited. I see no objection to so regarding it, and no ambiguity in this use of the word "subject." I suspect that those who detect an ambiguity are led to this by having previously expelled all notion of process from judgment. Thinking of judgment as a momentary intuition, they suppose that its content must be present as a whole simultaneously to mind. They find it difficult to conceive of a state of mind in which the whole of Darwin's or Adam Smith's contentions are grasped simultaneously and seen each in due relation to the rest. They find themselves, therefore, bound to deny that the *Wealth of Nations* or the *Origin of Species* is a judgment. If, however, passage and process are essential features of all assertion, the distinction is at most one of degree; and often, certainly, it is not beyond the wit of man to sum a whole treatise effectively within the limits of a single grammatical sentence. I think, therefore, that the notion of the subject of a book ought to be taken quite seriously and literally, as implying the correct view, that a series of statements which is



unitary, owes its unity to the presence in each and all of a common subject, as well as to the continuity of the movement in which that common subject receives its complex determination.

## 3

Suppose now that we have before us a document, recording a train of thought so unified, dealing continuously with a single subject. It might be the description of a battle, the analysis of a statesman's character, a treatise of political economy, or a textbook of geometry. In any case it will be set out in a number of discrete statements, with pauses more or less marked between each. The main question I wish to ask is how the relation between these semi-independent entities is to be conceived. That they somehow represent a continuous movement of thought, and preserve a constant reference to the same subject, we can now take for granted. But the problem is how precisely these things are achieved. Of course, it may be that no general answer is possible. This seems to be the view of Prof. Bosanquet.<sup>1</sup> He emphasises the point that judgment breaks up into judgments, and admits that in consequence, we cannot speak of *a* judgment without a certain obscurity, an obscurity which is only partly resolved by saying (as he does) that any extent of judging activity may be regarded as one judgment, which can be summed up in a single proposition. But "the question," he says, "is one of continued identity, and therefore must be dealt with as concerning organised wholes or

<sup>1</sup> *Logic* (Second Edition), Vol. I., p. 82.



systems." By this he means, if I understand him rightly, that the unity and consecution of thought will be different in different spheres according to the nature of the subject dealt with in each, and that no general answer is possible to the question put above. We should, of course, expect to find far-reaching differences between the consecutiveness of a description and that of a geometrical demonstration; but it is not self-evident that the general question of the consecutiveness of thought cannot profitably be raised. Anyway, it is the general question that I am here concerned with.

Let me first put three possible views as to the relation between the successive propositions in a continuous discourse.

It may be supposed *first*, that each is *external* to every other. Admitting that all have in common the mark of contributing to the definition of a single subject, it may yet be held that, apart from repetitions and redundancies, each makes a distinct contribution, and is so far self-contained, an atom of fact or truth. But this clearly will not do. The various statements are obviously inter-related, and they are made by a mind aware in general of their inter-relation. Even the loosest unity in a discourse requires that what is now said should have regard to what was said before; and in fact, by the use of particles and in other ways, our speech bears constant evidence to the watchfulness of the mind in this respect, to its persistent effort to indicate the nature of the transitions through which it passes. Further, it is easily shown in detail that the propositions asserted in a continuous discourse are not mutually exclusive; they may and commonly do



overlap. A description of a battle, for example, may well begin by stating in general the course of events and the nature of the issue, and subsequently expound the detailed movements by which this result was reached. Euclid similarly begins by announcing the proposition to be proved, before he proceeds to make the construction and develop the reasoning which proves it. A merely external relation, then, of the several attributions is untenable. The common subject is not the only bond of union between them.

A second possibility would be to suppose that the series is *cumulative*. It might be supposed, I mean, that all the preceding propositions are carried forward at each step, and the new determination added to them. The series would then be regarded as the progressive determination of a single subject, which reached its natural end when the subject was fully or completely determined. Absolute completeness no doubt is unobtainable, but a relative completeness on the scale adopted is quite conceivable. But this view again does not seem wholly satisfactory. If it were true, then any such series would advance from simple to complex. The burden on the mind of the reader would increase progressively as he turned page after page, and fatigue would surely overcome him, in a discourse of any length, long before he reached the end. Books would be much shorter than they now are, if the writer in composing them, and the reader in reading them, had at every moment to sum all that had been said before, and make an addition to it. It is obvious, I think, that the end of an argument or of a book does not, in fact, bear all this weight. Experience suggests rather that in an argument, as in a story, the maximum



complication comes near the beginning, and the latter stages are comparatively simple and straightforward.

A third possibility would be to regard the series of propositions as symbolising a *continuous movement*. Its continuity, it may be suggested, is preserved in that something is always carried forward from the preceding; but it is correctly called movement because there is real transition, because something is always being left behind. And further, terms appropriate primarily to movement, like "pace" and "direction," spring to mind naturally in following and describing the sequence of thought. But this view again is inadequate. Thought is at once more free and less free than the metaphor of movement suggests. A movement is defined, as Aristotle says, by its starting point and its goal: given these, the rest is determined. There is no varying the order of the houses you pass on the road from Manchester to Stockport. But even the most precise and exacting argument leaves something to taste and art in its exposition; and in poetical or descriptive writing the sequence would seem often a mere caprice of the composer, if it were not that it is felt to have an æsthetic justification, that in it especially the writer is felt to express and vindicate his artistic mastery. On this side, then, thought is more free; if it moves from point to point through infinite intermediates, yet those intermediates are themselves chosen. Unlike moving bodies, moving thought is emancipated from the tyranny of the straight line. But the metaphor ascribes also, as I said, too great a freedom of thought. For a movement may start anywhere and end anywhere. All places are alike



to it, each position perfectly co-ordinate with every other. But in thought there is system and subordination. It may not affect the argument whether you say "A is B because C is D," or "since C is D, A is B," but it does matter whether you say "C is D because A is B," or "A is B because C is D." Certain things are dependent on certain others, and the relation is not reversible at will. These interdependencies limit the freedom of thought after a fashion to which movement offers no obvious parallel.

The last of my three suggestions, then, fails me. The unity of a discourse refuses to accept any of the three formulæ offered. And yet each formula has its truth. The successive propositions are to some extent mutually exclusive and independent of each other. Reflection may show that, if you deny this one, you must deny that one too; that if you accept this, you must also accept that. Here and there the writer or speaker will expressly indicate such interconnections. But such patches of explicit inference are rare even in theoretical writing. For the most part the writer contents himself with a sequence of apparently independent assertions. These are, no doubt, in fact connected by other bonds than inferential necessity. A biography, for instance, must conform in a general way to the time sequence of the events which it records and unifies. Some guiding sense of these relations must certainly be presupposed in the thinker; but in general each proposition seems to be drawn direct from a renewed inspection of the subject under discussion. It is in no way constituted by its predecessors, though its appearance at this point in the sequence may be occasioned by them. The new-comer is like the



domino which continues the line: an independent entity, but able to occur just there because it fits on at one end to what was there before.

But this requirement that the new-comer should fit on, forces the recognition of a certain cumulative factor. For obviously it is not merely the last thing said that the continuation must fit. Where would be our security in that case against repetition? And how could there be a middle or an end, or indeed a whole in any intelligible sense, if this is denied? If we ever ended, it would be only because we had no more pieces to play. No: in each sentence something is added: the effect is cumulative. We need only qualify that by noting that that to which the new is added is not itself as such present to the mind. So great a strain as that is not put on our memory. When all goes well, the reader or writer does not need distinctly to recall anything he has written or read before. What governs the utterance or understanding of the present statement would seem rather to be some kind of general impression of the whole as already determined and as requiring further determination.

And finally, it is impossible to deny a certain appropriateness in the metaphor of movement. As we read or think we are traversing a path, we are on a journey. Things do fade into the distance and get left behind. Never perhaps once for all, as in travelling: for at any moment something that has been passed, that has become mere background, may be recalled into the foreground; and it does not simply reappear with its former associates, as objects will when you come back to them on the ground. Thought is free, as we have seen, and may bring together at



any moment things formerly far separated. But though thought has its own laws, and needs perhaps one or two extra dimensions to explain them, yet the laws are, to some extent, the laws of a movement.

## 4

These three metaphors, then, are all false and all true. A typically philosophical result, you will say, especially as they have been shown to be more false than true: and you may ask why we should waste our time on obviously inadequate metaphors, instead of facing the question directly. The answer to that is that thought cannot be described without metaphor, and that these are metaphors which we can hardly escape using. It is some advance to perceive that there are alternative metaphors available, that each has its defects, and that the merits of one may be used to supplement the deficiencies of another. But I had also a further object in undertaking this analysis. I wanted to recommend to you what appear to me to be two complementary truths, which I will now lay before you.

The first is the reality of the time-factor in thought. On that point, I think I have already said enough. I would only add now that, if this is conceded, it must be untrue to say with Bosanquet that the ideal of thought is a judgment in which the whole is predicated of itself. For, so far as I can give any meaning to such an ideal, it is a meaning which excludes process and development altogether. Nor can I see that it is a legitimate escape from this difficulty to postulate at the outset with Mr. Joachim<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Truth*, pp. 76, 168.



that truth and thought are ideally, or in themselves, timeless, and then without apology to attach to them predicates which have no meaning apart from time. The timeless actuality, which is for him the only significant whole, is, he tells us repeatedly, a process, self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled. It manifests itself in movement, and its movement or self-fulfilment is truth. Of this actuality, we are told, "the temporal process is nothing but a fragmentary and arrested portion." Thus movement must be denied here, as the word "arrested" plainly indicates, in order to be asserted there. No doubt, there are metaphysical reasons for this procedure. But it seems to me essential to maintain that every judgment is finite and limited. Every judgment would require infinite supplementation to express the whole truth about anything. And this supplementation could only be given by an infinite continuation of the judging activity in an infinite series of propositions. Truth is always less than the whole truth. If this were not so we should never be able to stop speaking or thinking without grave dissatisfaction. But, in fact, the finite and limited assertion is the response to a finite and restricted demand. If every judgment aimed at all truth, no judgment would achieve any truth. The unrestricted aim is contrary to the very nature of judgment. Thus in Mr. Joachim's "timeless actuality," which is also a living and moving whole, judgment goes the way of movement. It is transferred there only to vanish and disappear. It becomes an unattainable ideal which is little more than a negation of the constitutive features of the actual. The logician, at least, must hold to the finitude of judgment and the reality of the time-factor.



But there is another side to the matter. Thought is a process and takes time; and its unity is the unity of a temporal process. The metaphors by means of which we tried to describe this unity broke down mainly because thought, in its transitions, has not merely to make the transition, but also to be aware of the transition which it is making. The series of propositions is required, not merely to present a certain unity to memory, or to an outside spectator, in the biographical or autobiographical judgment; it has also at every point in its development to express and possess its own unity. It is therefore a condition of the unity of thought that thought shall continuously, in some sense, rise superior to its own temporal character. My last task in this paper is to attempt to give some analysis of the fashion in which this requirement is in practice satisfied.

Let me first quote an *obiter dictum* of Mr. Bertrand Russell's.<sup>1</sup> "The study of any topic," he says, "is like the continued observation of an object which is approaching us along a road. What is certain to begin with is the quite vague knowledge that there is *some* object on the road. If you attempt to be less vague, and to assert that the object is an elephant, or a man, or a mad dog, you run a risk of error. But the purpose of continued observation is to enable you to arrive at such more precise knowledge." Mr. Russell's suggestion is, I take it, that thought begins with a vague vision of its object, to which, by degrees, by means of something which is, or corresponds to, continued observation, it succeeds in giving a more determinate form. By "the study of a topic" is meant the attempt to grasp a theoretical problem like that of memory,

<sup>1</sup> *Analysis of Mind*, p. 164.




the problem with which Mr. Russell was actually faced when he wrote those words. Thus "observation" is metaphorical. It is not meant to imply the use of the eyes or of memories arising from their use. What Mr. Russell suggests is that the mind of a student grappling with such a problem is from the beginning and throughout its advance in a kind of perceptual relation to its object. It is this suggestion that I wish to adopt and develop.

However much I help myself out with metaphor and combinations of metaphor, I find I cannot construct even a partially satisfactory account of the process which is thought, or make sense of its unity, without supposing that the mind has throughout a contact with its object which is independent of the momentary assertion, though it is also the ground and source of each assertion and is continuously modified and developed by each assertion. In that contact the object is presented as an individual whole of unexhausted, and, in principle, inexhaustible possibilities, among which selective attention picks out now this feature, now that, for actuality under the forms of judgment. The focus and centre of the mental act is always a proposition, but the proposition has concrete meaning and value only as the focus of this whole, out of which it emerges and into which it sinks back as a new proposition succeeds it. The proposition disappears, but its work remains. The felt or intuited whole gains definition and coherence as the process continues; and, in consequence, the proposition, which is its momentary focus, is grasped and "placed" with increasing ease and distinctness. Hence memory, in the sense of the recall or revival of the previously presented, plays no essential part in



thought. It is not necessary, it is not even advisable, that one should, in this sense, remember what was said before. Such recall or revival belongs rather to the pathology of thinking, and is occasioned by the failure to achieve continuous and consistent development of the object. The operating control in the normal development of thought is a picture of the whole with which thought is occupied, on which each preceding proposition has left its mark.

This, then, is the principle which I wish to advance as the necessary complement of the principle of the reality of the time-factor – that the unity of thought in its successive stages is made possible by the presence at each and every stage of a controlling intuition of the whole which is being progressively revealed and defined. It may be called the principle of the *Intuitive Basis of Judgment*. 

With the aid of this principle it seems to me appreciably easier to understand many features of the thought sequence as it is presented to memory and introspection, or in such continuous discourses, whether narrative, descriptive, or argumentative, as I have had throughout in mind. I take it for granted that *mere* intuition is, as Kant says, blind, *i.e.* non-existent; that it effectively exists only in the act of judgment, as focused on a proposition; and that, as so focused, the intuited is only partially or one-sidedly actualised. It follows that even the physical description of an object which seems to be presented as a whole to sense involves the gradual development of a whole which is not, as such, so presented. Thus, even here, the whole which is intuited as the basis of the series of assertions is not identical with that which is seen. This whole is made, not found;



constructed, not received; its progressive development excludes the notion of an absolute given. But if in this extreme case the object is, after all, not presented, there is the less difficulty when we turn to more theoretical regions in which the object seems not to be presentable at all. For in all cases it is presentation to thought that is aimed at and achieved in judgment, and with that, the so-called presentation to sense has no necessary connection.

But where sense is excluded or remotely distant, the task of thought and exposition is undoubtedly made very much harder. Where assistance from the senses is not available, it is harder to fix the object of thought at the outset, and harder to keep it steadily in mind. Hence in theoretical discussions the preliminaries are very troublesome. The essential aim of these preliminaries is to define in outline a whole of intuition, the further possibilities of which can be subsequently explored. It is easy to fail in this altogether, with the result that no real question is ever asked and no real judgment made. The discourse then becomes a series of analytic or trifling propositions in which there is no real advance, a more or less elaborate begging of the question. That is one alternative. The other alternative, equally fatal, is that for lack of an adequate basis in intuition each proposition has a damaging vagueness and ambiguity, and the series as a whole lacks the unity which it claims. But if its failure is more complete, theoretical discussion at its best and most successful may claim to achieve a fuller and more complete unity than any other. The difficulty of theoretical discussions to a reader is due less to the complication of the argument than to the difficulty which



the unpractised reader experiences in framing the intuition of a whole without the aid of sense. And the lessening resistance which the opening passages of any discourse, as it develops, offer to the understanding of any reader or hearer is due to the gradual disappearance of the uneasiness caused by the absence of a whole of intuition sufficiently developed to give life and significance to the propositions enunciated.

I hope it is not necessary for me to illustrate my thesis any further. I claim that something can, after all, be said as to the nature and conditions of that conscious unity which is an essential feature of all continuous thought; and that the principles which I have laid down apply to thought in all its departments and applications, in a work of science or philosophy, a novel, a play, a poem. In all alike the temporal series of assertions is held together by this intuited background. It is the scene on which the plot develops. And as for the plot in general, the plots of all discourses, descriptive or theoretical, narrative, dramatic, or poetical, seem to me to have much in common. There is first the setting of the scene – what dramatists call, I believe, the exposition. Then there is the tying of the knot. The whole, half defined, constitutes a problem. One element conflicts with another, and the consequent demand for further articulation which will solve and reconcile, produces tension and excitement in the mind of the reader. Complication may succeed complication; but eventually some pretence of a solution must be offered. The knot must be untied, and the various strands straightened out. Then the question is answered, the story done: the curtain falls.



## VIII

### PLATO AND THE TRIPARTITE SOUL<sup>1</sup>

#### I. *Provenance*

THE most diligent search among the fragments of pre-Socratic thinkers fails to discover in them even the germ of anything that a modern would recognise as moral philosophy. A few common-sense precepts concerning the conduct of life, and a notion of cosmic justice as a principle preserving proportion and isonomy, preventing one of the warring natural forces from establishing a tyranny over the rest – that is pretty well all one can find to fill the empty place. If the searcher pins his faith to Diels, he will find even among the Pythagoreans hardly anything but an obscure allusion to a theory which represented virtue as a number. If he turns to the Sophists, the field of ethical speculation is wider, but still not very wide. A clever rhetorical use of the antithesis between law and nature scarcely conceals the fact that we are moving still in the region of practical precept. If morality has become a problem at all, it is a problem of conduct, not a problem of philosophy: the question is how to live, not how to understand life. In Democritus, Natorp has made a valiant attempt to discover an ethical theory of importance and influence; but though the fragments, such as they are – and many may be spurious – suggest that he had a theory, they are a

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, April, 1915.



long way from revealing what his theory was. And apart from that, it remains to be proved (in spite of Natorp's efforts) that the writings of Democritus were known in Athens before the days of Aristotle. It is very doubtful whether Plato ever read them, and Prof. Burnet asserts roundly that he did not.

No doubt there was little metaphysics, in the modern sense, and less logic, in Greek thought prior to Socrates; but the historians of philosophy give far more credit in these fields to the pioneer work of earlier thinkers than in the field of ethics. We have been told, almost too often, that if we divide the "flux" of Heracleitus by the "being" of Parmenides the result will be the Platonic "idea." And the Eleatics are saluted, after Aristotle, as the founders of logic. But in ethics we are asked to begin with the Sophists, and to pass from them, after a short course of Socratic logic-chopping on the theme "virtue is wisdom," straight to the full-blown glory of Plato. Ethics, it seems, was the latest born of the children of philosophy. It had a worldly and philistine grandfather in the Sophists, and in Socrates a heroic but narrow-minded father. Of this unpromising ancestry was born in the fourth century B.C., in or near the Academy, the Platonic ethics, to be the subject of genuine but rather hesitating admiration to generations of scholars and philosophers. Admiration hesitates because, though one hardly likes to say so when the ancestry is so well-attested, the child is surely no true Greek after all. The speech is prophetic and oracular; the doctrine is mystical and ascetic; there is an all-pervading consciousness that the human soul is not at home in this world and in this body, which could not have been engendered



under the Greek sun. So the shadow of a bar sinister, of a taint of colour in the blood, falls across the cradle. And that shadow has always remained. Aristotle it is true did something to remove it; but after him Stoic, Christian, and neo-Platonist let the Orient loose upon us. "Wir haben uns mit eigenen Händen die Lebensader unterbunden und hinken als verkrüppelte Judenknechte hinter Jahve's Bundeslade her!"

Such is the general impression produced by the average modern account of Plato's teaching on the ethical side. But the ancients regarded Plato as less original. They freely accused him of shameless and persistent plagiarism.<sup>1</sup> The *Republic* was a theft from Protagoras, the *Timaeus* from the Three Books bought from Philolaus. His refutations of the Eleatics were borrowed again from Protagoras. Diogenes' account of Plato summarises a detailed proof of a deep debt to Epicharmus. Aristippus, Antisthenes, and Bryso are also mentioned as sources from which Plato "took what he required." It is no doubt true that much of this is only malicious gossip and cannot be supposed to rest on any substantial truth. But it does show at any rate that Plato was not regarded as an isolated phenomenon. In this paper we are concerned only with the ethical antecedents of Plato, and of preceding or contemporary philosophies only with the Pythagorean. It happens that tradition supplies connecting links between Platonism and Pythagoreanism on the ethical side which deserve careful investigation. I do not propose in this paper to undertake such an investigation: my intention is less ambitious – assuming the tradition

<sup>1</sup> Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, p. 38, note 94.



to be in the main sound, to consider where it leads. The tradition, tacitly rejected by Diels, is accepted by Burnet,<sup>1</sup> following Döring,<sup>2</sup> and my object is to follow out the line of thought which they indicate.

Diogenes twice asserts that Pythagoras invented the use of the Greek φιλόσοφος, φιλοσοφία for philosopher and philosophy in place of the hitherto usual σοφός, σοφία. For none, he said, was wise save God. Sosicrates and Heraclides of Pontus are given as authority for a conversation between Pythagoras and Leon, the tyrant of Phlius (or as another account has it, of Sicyon). Leon asked Pythagoras what he was, and he answered “φιλόσοφος.” Life, he said (so Diogenes continues), was like a πανήγυρις, i.e. like the company that assembled from all quarters at the games. Some came to compete, some to traffic, but the best came to look on. So in life, some had a slavish nature, seeking for glory or profit: but the others, the philosophers, sought truth. The parable is clearly meant to explain the meaning and use of φιλόσοφος. The contemplative life is the ideal, and man has two alternatives to it – the search for pleasure and the search for glory. This clearly implies that Pythagoras used the three words φιλόσοφος, φιλότιμος, φιλοκερδής, which are the characteristic names in Plato for the three parts of the soul, or words closely related to them. The use of φιλόσοφος for σοφός would no doubt be conditioned on the one side by the belief that the wisest are not really wise but only seekers after wisdom, and on the other by the desire for a form analogical to φιλότιμος

<sup>1</sup> E.P.G., § 45. *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato*, § 25. Cf. also Burnet's note on Plato, *Phaedo*, 62 B., in his edition of the dialogue.

<sup>2</sup> A. Döring, “Wandlungen in der pythagoreischen Lehre” in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. V. (1891-2), pp. 503 ff.



and φιλοκερδής. But we have not to rely on a mere inference from this story for evidence of the fact that Pythagoras used the notion of a tripartite soul before Plato did. The Platonic division into λογισμός, θυμός, and ἐπιθυμία is attributed by Galen, on the authority of Poseidonius, to Pythagoras, though Galen adds that Poseidonius inferred this, not from any writings of Pythagoras (since none had been preserved), but from the writings of "some of the disciples." And Iamblichus is said by Stobaeus to have attributed the same view to the school of Plato, to Archytas, and to the rest of the Pythagoreans. It should be noted that the attribution of the tripartite psychology to the Pythagorean school is current in philosophic circles not hostile but friendly to Plato.

Now apart from the connection with the Pythagoreans the interesting point in this tradition is the implied assertion that the tripartite psychology is an integral part of a wider doctrine, which Burnet calls the theory of the three lives, and which involves that exaltation of the activity of contemplation which is common to Aristotle and Plato and finds its noblest and most complete expression in the philosopher-king of the *Republic*. If true, this is important. It would justify us in asserting that wherever we meet the exaltation of the philosophic or contemplative above the practical life we have, implicit at least, the tripartite soul. And since the praise of philosophy as the summit of human endeavour often occurs both within and without the Platonic writings without explicit reference to the tripartite psychology, the range of evidence on which we have to base our interpretation of that psychology is thus immensely increased. The many ill-conceived attempts which



have been made to show that the tripartite psychology is practically confined to the *Republic*, and is there forced upon Plato by a rather strained parallelism between the State and the human soul, will collapse automatically: for it is easy to show that there are clear traces of the doctrine, interpreted in this wide sense, in dialogues earlier and later than the *Republic*. Besides this the interpretation of the psychology cannot but be profoundly affected by an attention to the implications of the tradition; and I shall attempt to show in this paper that if the close connection between the Three Lives and the three parts of the soul is kept in mind a good many difficulties which have been found in the tripartite psychology seem less pressing, the so-called parallelism of State and soul in the *Republic* becomes more comprehensible, and that in general we achieve a correction of perspective which gives increased clearness and definition to the whole picture.

## 2. *The Doctrine*

The parable attributed to Pythagoras divides humanity into three classes, the covetous, the ambitious, and the curious, each being named after the ruling passion. But it is too much to suppose that the covetous are wholly incurious or the curious wholly unambitious. What the division specifies is the three typical motives of human action, and all three motives will be found operating at different times in every normal human soul. Thus the classification of lives or men becomes a classification of motives, or, in the vague modern sense of that word, of desires. Every human soul has



implanted in it at birth a natural tendency to seek these three things, profit, honour, and knowledge. Now in general it is true – though exceptions are to be found – that the three pursuits are incapable of combination. To seek profit is to forego for the time being the pursuit of honour or knowledge, and to seek knowledge is to forego for the time being the pursuit of profit or honour. Thus *prima facie* at least it appears that human nature is three-sided, and while one side is being satisfied the other two are being starved. The counsel of the moralist might be that each side should be satisfied in turn, or it might be that one side was evil and should be starved altogether, or again that one was all-important and should receive so far as possible exclusive attention. We know as a matter of fact that the last is the advice given in the *Phaedo*, and that in the *Republic* an attempt is made to show that in knowledge there is both honour and profit, so that, in a sense, exclusive attention to one of these three sides of our nature results in the satisfaction of all three, while exclusive attention to any other brings misery and disaster.

What Plato tries to show in the last case is that honour and profit are found where they are not sought. There is no question of interpreting the search for knowledge as at the same time a search for honour or profit, and little effort is made to conceal the fact that the honour is not what the man of honour would recognise as such and the pleasure is far different from any that the man of pleasure conceives. Nevertheless knowledge does bring with it true pleasure and, we must suppose, true honour: for the whole soul is content and at peace when knowledge is attained. This is the gist of Plato's



proof that the philosopher is 729 times as happy as the tyrant and many times as strong. But there is another typical case in which two motives do, it seems, really combine, *i.e.* in which two sides of our nature do simultaneously seek and find their satisfaction. The love of knowledge leads a man, reluctantly it is true, but inevitably, to empire. The philosopher's empire is within himself, and the subject over which he asserts it is his own covetous instincts. He must spare time from his preoccupation with the knowable to keep order among this multitude; and when obedience has to be enforced, the multitude proving rebellious, the love of honour ranges itself beside the love of knowledge. In regard to its true business of knowing, the philosophic impulse is sufficient to itself, and the same is true, it seems, of the secondary task of rule, when the subjects are willing and loyal and co-operate gladly; but when rebellion threatens, ambition takes the field beside knowledge; for honour as well as truth is at stake in the conflict. In this victory then ambition and philosophy together seek and find satisfaction. But both are fighting for self-preservation. And since the struggle and effort is occasioned by a defect, and the result is a removal of evil rather than an achievement of good, the satisfaction is negative rather than positive, and only for that reason is common to these two diverse motives. It still remains true, therefore, that genuine satisfaction of any one side of our nature excludes that of the others. Each has its own characteristic activity which cannot be combined with either of the others.

Socrates' counsel in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic* is that the love of knowledge should be the



leading motive in life. Nothing is to stand in the way of its satisfaction. Attention to anything else is only excused by necessity. Pleasure and honour, as such, are not to be sought at all. The undivided pursuit of knowledge, and that alone, brings a man success in this world and in the next. The knowledge to be sought is called knowledge by no figure of speech: it is not a knowledge of arms or ships or houses, not a knowledge of human good nor of anything else that might be supposed to be useful to the citizen or to the politician. It is metaphysics or theology – knowledge of the eternal real – which is the title to supremacy in the soul and in the State. If this is a paradox, it is certainly deliberate and intended. No attempt is made either in the *Phaedo* or in the *Republic* to show that from this metaphysical knowledge conclusions can be deduced which are directly applicable to the ordinary affairs of life. These are not the fruits of philosophy. But as preoccupation with the visible changing world of experience necessarily produces a will which is restless and variable, so the apprehension of eternal immutable reality infects the will with peace and constancy of purpose. The reward is that the philosopher grows like the divine on which he gazes.<sup>1</sup> The world he now knows is really one and eternal, and time and multiplicity are shadows and illusions. Responding to that knowledge his will, preserving like the world a surface of change and mutability, is in reality one and unchanging. Thus it seems that in philosophising as continuously as the body will allow the soul is not withdrawn from life

<sup>1</sup> *Theaet.*, 176 B., ὁμολῶσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν. The passage is an epigrammatic summary of the ethical doctrine of the *Phaedo* and *Republic*.



but is actually finding its way through it, and similarly it is not neglecting its secondary function of rule but is actually performing it. It is only when discord and disaffection arises that the business of ruling interferes with philosophy. In the temperate man, loyalty and co-operation are secured, and the philosophic contemplation need never be interrupted.

To some it has been a matter of surprise that Plato counted so confidently on finding these three characters – the love of knowledge, of honour, and of profit – graven “in larger letters” on the life of his ideal State. But if these are the three characteristic pursuits and preoccupations of humanity, a State in which any is lacking would be incomplete. Any society whatever is bound in some degree to exhibit all three, even though the social organisation which is called the State refused explicit recognition to one or another. The healthy State which does no violence to nature must needs recognise all three; and the only question for Plato is in what form are they to be expressed. He is not relying on any hazardous parallel between the soul of man and the soul of the State, but on the plain fact that State-organisation must take account of every need and demand of man’s nature. The activities of the community then will necessarily fall into these three classes. There will be the work of production – the economic or profit-seeking activity – the work of self-protection and self-assertion inspired by the love of honour, and the search for truth inspired by the love of wisdom. Every State has these three interests, and in forming the ideal State we must see that the organisation makes due provision for each.

So far the doctrine of the tripartite soul will carry



us, and Plato does not attempt to push it any farther. He does in fact argue that each of these three interests should be in the professional keeping of separate bodies of men – honour in the keeping of the army, knowledge in that of the ruling elders, production in the hands of craftsmen who may neither fight nor rule. But the separation of classes is not based on any inference from the division of functions. That arrangement is recommended because it is likely on other grounds to be the most efficient. Certain men are to be specially trained to think for the State, certain others to fight for the State, and others again to produce for the State. This does not mean that the rulers are devoid of appetite or self-assertion, so that they cannot show courage or temperance, or that the soldiers must not think and can have no wisdom, or that the craftsmen, as some writers seem to suppose, are appetite and nothing more. As an individual, in his individual relations, each citizen of the State will of course, so far as is proper and possible, employ all three activities and exhibit all the cardinal virtues. But each group is entrusted by the State with a special function, and the individuals composing it are, each in a certain part of his life, active on behalf of the State. All may and should have wisdom and courage, but it is only the courage of the soldiers which is the courage of the State, and only the wisdom of the guardians which is the wisdom of the State. The class of craftsmen have a special function to perform, *viz.* the production of the necessaries of life, but the proper performance of this function does not of itself constitute any State-virtue. For it is no virtue in a man to see that he does not lack the necessaries of life; and the love of money



or profit is only a common and pernicious perversion of the innocent desire for a competency. No action of a man or of a State should be a seeking for wealth: that unnatural passion is the root of all evil: but all should be inspired or at least controlled by the love of wisdom, and some should be inspired by the indignant rejection of dishonour. Thus the life of honour and the life of pleasure are both excluded; for if a man is to live for honour he must give up knowledge altogether, and if he is to live for pleasure he must give up both honour and knowledge. The life of the State must be the life of knowledge. Yet, in a sense, both honour and pleasure are included. Neither may take the helm, but for both there are services to perform under the command of knowledge. There are certain appetites whose satisfaction is necessary to life, and there is a love of honour which is necessary to the good life itself, at least on this earth.

Life engages a man's appetites, his honour, and his curiosity. In all three fields the State is necessarily engaged; and it therefore disposes itself into three armies, one for each field. The smallest of the three armies directs and controls the movements of the other two.

Looking back over the foregoing analysis we may distinguish three applications of the notion contained in the Pythagorean fable. (1) It originates as a division of men into three classes according to the manner of life they lead – the life of knowledge, the life of honour, the life of gain-getting or pleasure. (2) It becomes, secondly, a classification of the motives which alternately operate in every individual. There are three wills between which men from time



to time hesitate, and hence the moral struggle. (3) Thirdly, in the perfect life when the love of knowledge is supreme, while the search for honour and gain as such ceases, yet the hunger for these things is not simply suppressed: one activity is supreme, but the other two persist as strictly subordinate activities in a residual form. There are the appetites which are necessary to life and there is the self-respect which is necessary to morality. In the perfect life there is still triplicity of function though there is unity of direction or motive. Thus the three forms are no longer alternatives; they are no longer three wills between which the man hesitates: they are all present together, united for the first time after a fashion which is described by the metaphor of ruler and subject.

The account of the origin of the State in the *Republic* supplies by implication yet a fourth view of the inter-relation of these three forms; and since the implication has not, so far as I know, been pointed out I may be excused for establishing it here. The State originates as a purely economic association. Co-operation makes the necessities of life less precarious; and the infant society, the "minimum city" (ἀναγκαιοτάτη πόλις), as Plato calls it, might be defined as an association for the satisfaction of the necessary appetites. Next, provision begins to be made for the amenities of life. This means that unnecessary appetites (which may of course be quite innocent) are recognised and their satisfaction is socially organised. By this door, luxury and wealth enter; and in their train they bring war. And the exigencies of war will no doubt provide a check and a discipline for the growing tribe of unnecessary



appetites. Temper (*θυμός*) now takes command instead of appetite. But the warrior needs training, and the State must devise a system of education for him. Once attention is turned to education there is no stopping place short of complete knowledge. The goal is the production of the philosopher, and when he comes, knowledge must supplant temper as the ruler of the State. When the philosopher rules, the city will be purged of all luxury and ostentation. The unnecessary appetites will be suppressed, the swagger of the soldier will be corrected, and the full-grown State will be ready for united action at home and abroad.

The application of all this to the individual is plain. Nothing interests or occupies the infant but the necessities of life. But alongside of the necessary appetites and out of them spring by degrees opportunities for enjoyment. Out of such enjoyment emerges the notion of the self as a thing to prize and develop. Hence a somewhat competitive self-assertiveness, which at once operates as a check upon the exploitation of the appetites. The young man will probably swagger a little; he will very likely be provocative in manner and strive after originality in dress. It is only by degrees that these things drop away, and perhaps by the time he is thirty he will be ready to depose Temper and put Knowledge on the vacant throne. For these reasons our future philosophers will serve first as soldiers. The State will thus use the characteristics of youth where they are valuable, and provide an occupation for the rulers at a time when they are too full of physical vigour and energy to be fit or able to concentrate their thoughts on the pursuit of truth.



Thus, (4) fourthly, in this passage we have by implication an evolutionary account of the three forms as successively dominating the life of the individual in its three stages of childhood, youth, and manhood. So looked at, the forms are once more in a sense alternatives, but not primarily alternatives between which the individual chooses. Appetite of some kind is his from birth; but temper and philosophy are later growths, successively superimposed, as it were, upon appetite; and it is only in the second half of a man's life that the love of knowledge can be expected seriously to influence conduct.

### 3. '*Parts*' of the Soul

In what sense does this doctrine involve us in the assertion of "parts" of the soul? The treatment of this question is commonly confused and prejudiced by the modern psychological classification of the elements of consciousness under the three heads of *Denken, Fühlen, Wollen* – Thought, Feeling, Desire – Cognition, Affection, Conation. The doctrine is treated as a stammering utterance of this great truth, and, under the spell of the Evolutionary Method, historians of philosophy treat Plato as a child who talked bad English or German instead of as a grown-up man who talked good Greek. But the modern classification, whether it is adequate or inadequate, proceeds upon an entirely different principle from the Greek. The point need not be argued in detail. It is at once evident from the fact that our psychologists are careful to inform us that their triad is in simultaneous occupation of consciousness; all three are present in *every* "psychosis"



though in varying proportions; while the Greek triad is often represented (as we have seen) as a triad of alternatives, each excluding the others, and each striving on occasion to supplant whichever of the other two is in possession. A man cannot choose whether he shall think, feel, or desire: he must do all three: but a man can and must choose whether he shall pursue truth, honour, or profit. No direct comparison, therefore, is possible between these two classifications.

The true analogue in modern thought to the Platonic division is to be looked for in moral philosophy, in the recognition, implicit or explicit in every system of ethics, of a duplicity in the will itself as the root of the moral problem. The moral struggle is conditioned by the fact that the man has two wills; and if we say "three" instead of "two" we have the problem as it appeared to Plato. The fact that we still speak Platonically of the moral conflict as a conflict between "reason" and "desire" does not blind careful writers to the obvious fact that there can be no conflict between the parts or elements of consciousness in the modern sense. Even Aristotle, who had already classified the activities of soul on a somewhat different principle from Plato's, refers to the conflict sometimes as one between *νοῦς* and *ὄρεξις*; but it follows from his analysis of *ὄρεξις* that there can only be conflict if there is *ὄρεξις* on the side of *νοῦς*, and *νοῦς* or some other form of cognition on the side of *ὄρεξις*. The modern threefold classification has nothing whatever to do with the moral conflict, and it may be taken as certain that any classification which approximates in any degree to the modern becomes inapplicable in the same degree to that



conflict. It is where moral philosophers attempt to classify motives and explore their possible collisions that they are treading the same ground as the three forms of Plato.

The comparison, then, of these three forms with the modern division of elements of consciousness is to be deprecated. But if it is made I cannot see any reason why it should be supposed that the modern method is any more successful than the ancient in preserving the unity of the soul. The modern looks inside himself and finds on every occasion three elements forming a complex whole which he calls a psychosis; the ancient looked at man's conduct and observed in it three tendencies, he looked at life and saw in it three necessary functions, and since life and conduct are manifestations of soul, he was bound to attribute the triplicity to soul. The difference is typical of the difference between the Greek and the modern view of soul. We are apt to think of soul as a thing we shall see if we turn our gaze inward, while the Greeks thought of it as the sum of those functions which are observed to differentiate living from lifeless matter. Hence we moderns, being ourselves men, think that only men have souls, while the Greeks had to credit plants with them. They did not mean that plants were capable of the inward gaze, but simply that plants were alive. A candid comparison of these two ways of regarding soul can hardly fail to result in the admission that the advantage lies wholly with the Greeks. Introspection in the literal and direct sense is probably impossible, and the kind of memory which passes under that name is extremely blurred and unreliable. Our knowledge of ourselves is not different in kind from



our knowledge of other people. In degree it is superior, more detailed and continuous, but it is very much hampered by prejudice and prepossession. If we formed our estimate of ourselves, as we form our estimate of others, from our actual conduct and behaviour, we should gain enormously in candour and determination; and if we applied the same method to animals we should be spared a good deal of false psychology. The only sound method of discovering the nature of soul is by the classification of its manifestations in the life of living things, and that road Plato has followed. If the activities of life are manifold the functions of the soul are manifold, and it is nonsense to say that by the recognition of such diversity the unity of life or the unity of the soul is destroyed.

In the preceding argument I have tried to show in detail that the diversity characterising Plato's tripartite soul is a diversity of function. As much is implied in the names by which Plato usually describes his triad. He calls them, as is well known, "forms" (εἶδη), "kinds" (γέννη), "characters" (ἦθη), "modes" (τρόποι), even "souls" (ψυχαί), and only occasionally "parts" (μέρη, μόρια). The division is what is known as logical division, the division of a genus into species. "Souls" means kinds of soul, and parts of soul means precisely the same thing. Similarly, in the *Gorgias*, ὀψοποιική is referred to as a "part" (μόριον) instead of as a "kind" of κολακεία (463B; cf. 464B, 466A). There is nothing surprising in the spacial metaphor, but it would indeed be odd if Plato thought of the soul as extended in space, operating physically with different portions of itself at different times. But there is little doubt that



when Plato said forms or kinds he meant what he said. On that hypothesis, and that alone, he is faithfully expounding the implications of the Pythagorean fable from which we started. And since in English the word "part" suggests a crudity of which Plato was incapable, and goes some way to excuse the patronising contempt with which the doctrine is often treated, we ought to accustom ourselves to describing the doctrine in terms which do less injustice to its meaning.

#### 4. *Influence and Importance of the Doctrine*

Not only has the doctrine of the tripartite soul been frequently misunderstood and misrepresented, but its importance and influence have been greatly underestimated. It is not too much to say that the doctrine dominates Plato's thought in the ethical sphere, and that in a fashion which would hardly be possible if the doctrine had been novel and of Plato's own invention. When, for instance, in the first book of the *Republic*, Socrates proves the superiority of the just man to the unjust under the three heads of wisdom, strength, and happiness, consciously or unconsciously he is guided by the three forms and is applying in succession the tests of attainment recognised by each. In another passage of the same book the reference is more definite. Socrates says that it is difficult to persuade the best men to rule: for a high salary will not tempt them and they are not ambitious. The love of honour and the love of money are mentioned: only the love of wisdom is omitted. But the paradox of the rule of philosophy is implied as plainly as can be – and this in Book I., which is often thought to be some years



earlier than the rest of the *Republic* and to belong to the "Socratic" period. Similarly Aristotle's *Ethics* begins with a reference to the three lives: the vulgar seek pleasure, sometimes perverted into money, the politician seeks honour, and finally there are the spectators, who live the life of contemplation. Aristotle's triple classification of motives (1104b, 30), καλόν-αἰσχρόν, συμφέρον-βλαβερόν, ἡδύ-λυπηρόν, is probably a by-product of the doctrine, and the use of καλόν-αἰσχρόν as the highest category may be connected with the notion of the highest activity as that of a spectator of life. Aristotle's triple classification of desire (ὁρεξις) into ἐπιθυμία, θυμός, and βούλησις undoubtedly comes from the same source and was probably simply taken over from the Academy. This is suggested, not only by the casual way in which the division is treated, the position of θυμός and its nature being nowhere adequately investigated in the Aristotelian corpus, but also by a consideration of the psychology of the *Laws*, which is a most valuable connecting link between the *Republic* and the *Ethics*. In the *Laws*, knowledge is no longer set forward as the supreme goal of life, and the notion of the human good is set in its place as the supreme director of conduct. The effort after τὸ ἀνθρωπινὸν ἀγαθόν is precisely what Aristotle calls βούλησις. Aristotle's three species of desire are in fact just the Socratic-Platonic three forms modified by the withdrawal of the paradox of the philosopher-king, and by the consequent divorce of practical wisdom from philosophy.

It is not necessary here to search the records of Greek philosophy for further detailed evidence of the profound and continued influence of the doctrine;



but we may remark in conclusion that all probabilities favour the truth of the tradition of its Pythagorean origin. The pure Ionic tradition from Thales to Democritus knows nothing of the three lives, and it is probable that no Greek thinker prior to Socrates called himself a φιλόσοφος outside the Pythagorean school. If Zeno really wrote a tract πρὸς τοὺς φιλοσόφους, as tradition says (Suidas, *Vors.* 127, 15), the title, as Döring has acutely suggested, would have been understood by his contemporaries in Magna Graecia to specify the Pythagoreans as the object of attack. The single fragment of Heracleitus which contains the word φιλόσοφος may well have the same reference. Χρὴ εἶ μάλα πολλῶν ἱστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι (Byw., 49, D. 35), "Lovers of wisdom must it seems have knowledge of many things." But wisdom, we may remember, is one, not many (B., 19); and this same Heracleitus accuses Pythagoras by name of possessing much learning but little sense (B., 16, D. 40), "Much learning does not teach understanding, or it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus." Here again therefore φιλόσοφος may well be used derisively for "Pythagorean."

The doctrine of the three forms is quite compatible with everything else that we know of the Pythagorean school. We know that they preached a doctrine of purification which was a kind of heretical Orphicism, and the burden of their heresy can hardly have been anything else but that "the purgative is philosophy" as the Socrates of the *Phaedo* teaches.<sup>1</sup> And that

<sup>1</sup> It can hardly be any but the Pythagoreans who are referred to by Epicharmus in the line—Θνατὰ χρὴ τὸν θνατόν, οὐκ ἀθάνατα τὸν θνατὸν φρονεῖν; and the same explanation must be given of his other apparent references to Plato, if the fragments are genuine.



doctrine as expounded by Socrates, who pretends to no originality, involves the three forms. The account of Pythagorean opinions given by Iamblichus contains the distinction of τὸ τῶν φιλοτιμιῶν γένος from τὸ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν (Diels, *Vors.*, 287, 41), as well as the classification of motives into pleasure (ἡδονή), profit (συνφέρον, ὠφέλιμον) and beauty (καλόν, εὖσχημον) (*Vors.*, 288, 10-17). It is true that the Pythagoreans are also credited with a fourfold division of the soul into νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη, δόξα, αἴσθησις, but it is surely the extreme of stupidity to suppose that this division conflicts in any way with the other. It would be as sensible to say that in the *Republic* the fourfold division into εἰκασία, πίστις, διάνοια, νοῦς, is in contradiction with the triple division into ἐπιθυμία, θυμός, λογισμός. But writers who solemnly discuss under which of these three heads αἴσθησις falls are presumably capable also of finding ἐπιθυμία somewhere in the division νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη, δόξα, αἴσθησις. They may be left to do their worst by themselves. Plainly a classification of the various forms of cognition cannot conflict with a classification of the needs and tendencies of human nature whose rivalry gives rise to the moral conflict and whose harmony is virtue.

The conclusion of the whole matter, then, is that we must amend our account of the origin of Greek ethics. Plato did not create out of nothing. In this paper I have avoided raising the question how much of Plato is Socrates. It is not a question to which a precise answer will ever be possible; but it is becoming increasingly certain to me at least that Prof. Burnet is nearer the truth than most of his critics. But however that question is answered, I feel sure that a very considerable part of the Socratic-Platonic



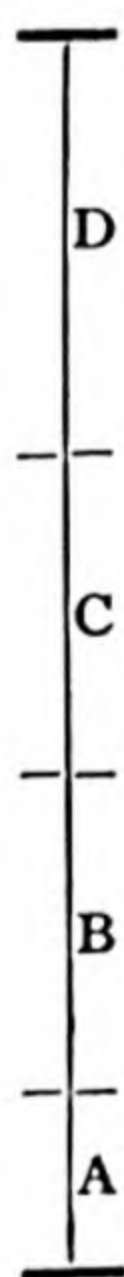
doctrine is in essence Pythagorean. The ethical speculation in particular derived its impetus and its leading ideas from that source, and received in the three forms a solid psychological foundation on which to build. Of course if Orphicism is Oriental, as some say it is, that would account for a taint of the East in Socratic-Platonic ethics. But it has never been proved that Orphicism was not indigenous, and in the absence of proof it is best to assume that it was. Thus ethics has a longer and more interesting ancestry than is sometimes supposed. Its roots indeed are really as deep as those of any other branch of philosophy; for if science was born in Ionia, philosophy was born in Magna Graecia in the Pythagorean and Eleatic schools.



## IX

### THE DIVIDED LINE OF *PLATO REP. VI.*<sup>1</sup>

AT the end of of the Sixth Book of the *Republic* Plato explains the Idea of Good by means of the Figure of the Sun. As the sun is the cause both of the becoming of that which is subject to becoming and of our apprehension of it and of its changes through the eye, so the idea of good is the cause of the being of that which is and also of our knowledge of it. As the sun is beyond *γένεσις*, so the Idea of Good is beyond Being. Glaucon says he does not understand. The simile is further elucidated by means of a line, divided into two parts, of which one stands for the *νοητὸν γένος τε καὶ τόπος*, where the Idea of Good bears rule, the other for the *ὁρατὸν γένος τε καὶ τόπος*, over which the sun is lord. The line is to be divided unequally (the inequality representing the unequal clearness of the objects each division stands for), and subdivided in the same proportions. Thus we get a line consisting of four parts in the ratio (say) 4 : 6 :: 6 : 9. Let us call the four parts A B C D respectively, A being the smallest, D the greatest, B and C necessarily equal. A (as Plato explains) stands for *εἰκόνες*, shadows, images in water and on polished surfaces, and the like: B stands for animals, plants, and the creations of human industry: C for the objects of



<sup>1</sup> *Classical Quarterly*, April, 1911. The reader may be referred further to Prof. A. S. Ferguson's admirable articles on "Plato's Simile of Light" in later issues of the same periodical (July and October, 1921).



that enquiry in which the objects denoted by B are treated as images, *i.e.* mathematical enquiries: D for the objects apprehended by dialectic, the Ideas themselves. The first equation asserted (510a 8) is – The objects of opinion : objects of knowledge :: representation : original (AB : CD :: A : B). There follows an explanation of the inferiority of mathematical to philosophical reasoning, and an explanation of the statement that the objects denoted by B are used as images or symbols by the enquiry concerned with C; as a result of which Glaucon perceives that the general distinction between C and D is that between the τέχναι (as they were called), *i.e.* those sciences in which the Guardians (as explained in the following book) were to be educated, and Philosophy or Dialectic. Finally a special πάθημα or affection of the soul is allotted to each of the four divisions of the line, to A εἰκασία, to B πίστις, to C διάνοια, to D νόησις, each πάθημα being clear in the same degree in which the objects it is concerned with are true.

The only other direct reference to the Line in the *Republic* is in a later passage (534a), which purports to be a reaffirmation of the previous division, but reaffirms it with slightly altered terminology. D is given ἐπιστήμη instead of νοησις, but the other three divisions stand as they were. A and B collectively are again referred to as δόξα; but νόησις becomes a general name covering C and D. The following equations are asserted – (1) Being : becoming :: intelligence : opinion (objects CD : objects AB :: affection CD : affection AB). (2) Intelligence : opinion :: science (ἐπιστήμη) : belief (πίστις) :: διάνοια : εἰκασία (affections CD : AB :: D : B :: C : A).



Socrates says he will neglect for the moment the equations which hold with regard to the objects apprehended in these various mental activities.

The first point to which I wish to call attention is that the Line is introduced as an explanation of the simile in which the Idea of Good is likened to that which is said to be its child or *ἐκγονος*, the Sun. The simile is an assertion of an identity of relation between two pairs of things, the Sun and the sensible, the Good and the intelligible; and if it were nothing more than a simile it would not in any way explain what relation (if any) holds between the two pairs of things compared.  $\alpha : \beta$ , it asserts, as  $\gamma : \delta$ , but of the relation of  $\alpha$  to  $\gamma$  or  $\beta$  to  $\delta$  it tells us nothing. That the preceding simile is more than a mere simile is suggested by calling the Sun the *ἐκγονος* of the Good. This hint is further developed in the Line, but for the relation parent-child is substituted the relation image-original. And this relation is not slipped in in parenthesis like the word *ἐκγονος*, but becomes the centre of the exposition. In the preceding passage we have a simile modified by the implication that the one set of terms is dependent upon the other. The Line explains the dependence of the one series on the other by means of a simile. Allowing for this change of emphasis, the first equation, the only equation, indeed, explicitly set out by Plato in his initial statement, is simply the simile of the Sun in equational form. He had said "the place of the Idea of the Good in the universe is analogous to that of the Sun in the visible world." He now (510a 5) gives us the statement which the Line was primarily constructed to convey as follows: "The object of thought is to the object of sight as



an image is to its original." Further, Plato, as if anxious to insist upon the close connection of what he is now saying with the simile of the Sun, carefully selects from among the various things to which the rather vague term *εἰκῶν* can be applied those which are directly due to the action of the Sun's light, *viz.* shadows and reflections on polished surfaces. The new point introduced by this statement is the relation of image to original, substituted, as I have said, for the relation of parent and child. By this relation Plato now proposes to elucidate the relation of the world of Being to the world of Becoming. In many respects the relation is particularly apt for the purpose.

(1) In the first place, the ordinary man would think twice before he would admit an image to be quite real – at any rate to be real in the same sense as its original.<sup>1</sup> A reflection of a building in water, for example, is not a self-existing thing like a house: it derives what transient being it has from that of which it is a feeble imitation, and may vanish any moment without making much difference to anybody. (2) Secondly, its being is derivative and derived from something to which its existence makes no difference. The reflection is in one place and its reality is in another; the reflection comes and goes but the original remains; if, on the other hand, the reflected object is destroyed the reflection is destroyed with it. (3) Again, an indefinite number of *εἰκόνες* are possible of one and the same original; but the original, which gives what life they have to

<sup>1</sup> For the unreality of images, *cf.* Hobbes, *Computation*, p. 17, "A man, a tree, a stone, are the names of the things themselves. . . . The images of these things, which are represented to men sleeping, have their names also, though they be not things, but only fictions and phantasms of things."



these images, is not thereby divided or diluted or modified in any respect whatever. In short, Plato chooses this as a good instance of a relation of one-sided dependence.<sup>1</sup> The equation then is an explanation of the relation of the sensible and supersensible worlds by means of a simile. The thing of sense, it is implied, is like an image. There is something, more real than it, from which what reality it has proceeds, and on the existence of which it depends; and it and its fellows may come into being, multiply their kind, and pass again into nothingness, without in any way affecting or modifying the eternal reality.

If I am right in supposing that this elucidation of the relation of the sensible to the supersensible is the *immediate* object (at any rate) of the simile of the Line, it seems to me to follow that many of the difficulties raised by modern editors are wide of the mark. They are puzzled, for example, by the fact that, while Plato more than once uses *δόξα* (or *δοξαστόν*) to describe the sensible sphere, he mentions as the objects with which it deals only *εἰκόνες σκίαί ζῶα φυτευτά σκευαστά*. Adam seems to think that only the obviousness of the inference prevented Plato from explaining that in *δόξα* was included *τὰ τῶν πολλῶν πολλὰ νόμιμα καλοῦ τε περὶ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων*. Having made this unwarranted addition he then proceeds to make the elements thus inserted the centre of his exposition of Plato's meaning. Such an addition would in my view only obscure the point of the equation. We are dealing with the relation of the objects accessible to sight to the objects accessible to the intelligence : the opinions of the many about

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Symp.* 211b. The relation of Beauty to the many beautiful things is such that *γίγνομένων τε τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἀπολλυμένων μηδὲν ἐκεῖνο μήτε τι πλεον μήτε ἔλαττον γίγνεσθαι μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν*.



justice are neither the one nor the other, but imperfect judgments passed upon facts of experience.

Other critics find the lowest division of the Line practically devoid of meaning – added, as they say, for the sake of symmetry. How they can take such a view in face of the equation set out in the passage just considered I cannot understand; and the very fact that they arrived at such a conclusion ought to have led them to reconsider their position.

A general point following from what I have just said is this. The line is not primarily a classification or comparison of kinds of intelligence, but of kinds of things accessible to the intelligence. It is the relation between the thought-thing and the seen-thing that the Line is intended to explain. Accordingly, in Plato's exposition "mental processes" are not referred to until it becomes necessary to justify the distinction between lower and higher νοητά: and for that purpose the distinction of method was obviously of primary importance. The four παθήματα of the Soul are mentioned last, and are logically an afterthought, though necessary for the completeness of the exposition. Here again commentators tend to reverse Plato's order – to regard the Line as primarily a distinction of four kinds or "stages" (as Nettleship says) of intelligence, implying in quite a secondary way a difference in the objects upon which the intelligence is directed. I can remember that my own view of the Line when I first read the *Republic* was much prejudiced by this reversal of the emphasis. I found Nettleship's statement of the progressive growth of intelligence interesting and satisfactory, but the invention of objects corresponding to these four stages seemed to me a curious piece



of artificiality on Plato's part, to be explained by an odd assumption prevalent among the Greeks that differences of apprehensions must be due to differences of the apprehended. I now frequently have to listen to this criticism in the essays of other people. Nettleship's view errs (though it may be mainly a question of emphasis) in two respects – (1) in putting the comparisons of apprehensions first, thus causing the other side of the assertion to seem artificial or otiose; (2) in treating the Line as essentially a progression from darkness to light, a construction which the proportions of Plato's division forbid. What I am here protesting against is the first of these mistakes. I think it is clear that the distinctions among *ὄντα* are prior to the distinctions of apprehension, and that the latter are to be interpreted by the aid of the former, not the former by the aid of the latter. To the reversal of this order is chiefly due (among other misapprehensions) the failure to perceive the importance of the lowest segment of the Line.

I now pass to the second of my objections against Nettleship's account. The Line is not a progression. It does not ask us to conceive of any series as a continuous development. There is a break in the middle, since B and C are demonstrably equal, which to those who talk of stages of intelligence is not merely devoid of significance but definitely hostile to the intended interpretation of the parable. In the Line, it is true, three pairs of terms are compared in respect of their clearness or truth; but these three pairs are not A and B, B and C, C and D (as in a progression), but A and B, C and D, AB and CD. (There are further comparisons which may be for



the moment ignored.) You may say then, if you like, that B is an advance upon A and D upon C; but you must not say that C is a similar advance upon B, though you may say that CD as a whole is an advance upon AB. This point is not as unimportant as it sounds. Let me discard symbols. You may say that the *εἰκαστόν* is a clearer form of the same thing than the *εἰκὼν*, that philosophy reveals the same thing in a clearer form than mathematics, or that reflection generally exhibits the same world in a clearer form than sight in general; but you are not entitled to say that mathematics is *πίστις* clarified, or that the *μαθηματικόν* is the same thing as the *ζῶον* in a clearer form. The reason of this is that the four divisions are not really co-ordinate. The lower subsections of the two worlds are both tentative, provisional, transitional; the higher subsections are both final. B (*ζῶα*, etc.) stands for the complete sensible existences whose mutilated representations are included under A, just as D stands for the full reality half concealed and half revealed in the mathematical enquiries of C. If B were not complete in itself and the goal of the half truths and semi-existences of A, it would not be truly analogous to D. This fact accounts for the break between the two middle subsections. Nevertheless it is true that Thought is but Sense clarified; and therefore AB considered as unitary is continuous and compared in point of adequacy with CD considered as a whole. But, it should be added, since B is simply a clearer form of A and D of C, it follows that the relation AB : CD is practically a disguised form of the relation B : D.

In my view, then, the equality of B and C, though



devoid of positive significance, is in no way hostile to the correct interpretation of the parable, since it is not intended to compare B and C directly at all. But those who persist in the misleading phraseology of "four stages of Intelligence" must suppose that Plato was not aware of the equality of B and C, thus accusing him of a simple mathematical blunder. Of course he was aware of it; and of course he was aware that a scheme of this kind was not a progression. The resources of his mathematics were quite equal to representing schematically the conception of "stages." For that an ordinary geometrical progression would have sufficed. If he did not use that device the only credible reason is that he did not want to use it. A progression, in short, was not what he intended to convey.

We can now proceed to consider the four *παθήματα* of the Soul which are allotted to these four classes of object. These four *παθήματα* are said to differ in clearness according as their objects differ in truth. Thus *εἰκασία* is not so clear as *πίστις* and *διάνοια* is not so clear as *ἐπιστήμη*. But what does this mean? It could hardly be said that because an image is inadequate its apprehension is inadequate, or that because mathematical truth is incomplete therefore its apprehension is blurred or obscure. The obscurity of the obscure may itself be clearly or obscurely apprehended, and the clearest demonstration may only confusedly convince. Mathematical knowledge may be somehow inadequate and yet be in itself the perfection of lucidity. I doubt, then, whether *εἰκασία* will differ from *πίστις* as the simile requires that it should, if it is taken to stand merely for the apprehension of an *εἶκόν*,



without knowledge that the *εἰκών* stands for anything other than itself. Still less if it is taken to stand for the more positively erroneous attitude which confuses shadows with things. Further, the word itself would be inappropriate for such a use. An attitude of that kind would be content with itself, untroubled by doubt as to its own authenticity; but the word suggests doubt, conjecture, implies a question asked but only half answered.<sup>1</sup> Suppose, on the other hand, a mind faced with an image, defective as all images are, fleeting and shifting as shadows and reflections are wont to be – with an image which he knows to be an image, but of which he does not know the original. He will be trying continually, on the ground of the imperfect evidence before him, to frame a reliable mental picture of that original. He will be in a state which is fairly called one of conjecture. When at last he succeeds in actually seeing with his eyes the things over whose image he puzzled, then conjecture gives place to assurance, doubt to certainty, *εἰκασία* to *πίστις*. He wanted to know what the thing really looked like, and now he knows. His question is answered, and he is at the end of his enquiry. Thus in the sphere of the *ὁρατόν*, in which we are only concerned with that which is accessible to the eye, the question asked in *εἰκασία* is finally answered in *πίστις*; the doubts suggested by the *εἰκών* are finally solved by the sight of the *ζῶον*. The eye can tell us what a thing looks like, if that is all we want to know.

Similarly, in the higher sphere, the motive which

<sup>1</sup> Adam, Vol. II., p. 72: “*εἰκασία* in this sense is a new coinage of Plato’s. The translation ‘conjecture’ is misleading, for conjecture implies conscious doubt or hesitation, and doubt is foreign to *εἰκασία* in Plato’s sense.”



inspires mathematical enquiry must be the desire to know the truth about Being, if such enquiries are to be felt by the enquirer as in any way obscure or defective. If that and nothing less is the motive of the enquirer, he will not be able to remain within the limits of these enquiries. When he has pursued them to their end, he will know that his question is not yet answered, that there is more to learn. Thus mathematics becomes, what Plato in his theory of education requires it to be, the stimulus to philosophy. To treat mathematics as an enquiry complete in itself is as absurd as to insist on studying the nature and habits of animals by the evidence of shadows and reflections when you have only to turn your head to see the animals themselves.

To this view it may be objected that, in the case of *εἰκασία* at any rate, the mental attitude which it describes is a purely imaginary one. There is no one, it may be said, who from shadows and reflections tries to conjecture what the nature may be of the things shadowed or reflected. We may reply, however, that there is no one who takes shadows and reflections for reality. It is true that there is a sort of plausibility in the view which makes these shadows and reflections a metaphorical description of current erroneous opinion passing with the uninstructed as final truth. This view, however, as we have already seen, is not directly suggested in the text of the *Republic*; and, since it gives more weight to a supposed implication of Plato's words than to their direct meaning, it should not be accepted without further support. Such further support is looked for in other passages in the Platonic writings. I now propose to examine these passages



to see what light, if any, they throw upon the problems of the Line.

(a) Adam appeals in the first place to the passage in the Fifth Book of the *Republic* in which the province of δόξα is distinguished from that of ἐπιστήμη. Here, as he says, it is stated that δοξαστά include τὰ τῶν πολλῶν πολλὰ νόμιμα καλοῦ τε περὶ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων; and since the contents of the two lower sections are called δοξαστά as well as ὁρατά, he infers that the distinction intended cannot be merely a distinction of ὁρατά, but must contain *inter alia* a distinction among "popular canons or opinions on the subject of what is beautiful, ugly, right, wrong, etc."<sup>1</sup> Now, in a general contrast between δόξα and ἐπιστήμη these facts are of course in place. In this context, however, if my account is correct, they can only come in by a sort of extension of the original scope of the image. Still, one could not object to such an extension if anything were gained by it. What then is gained? The discrimination of two kinds of δόξαι required for the exposition of the theory becomes extraordinarily difficult, especially when it is admitted, as Adam admits, that πίστις may be right or wrong. That admission rules out the distinction between opinions as true and false; and leaves a difference which, as Adam frankly says, is "a varying quantity," between the reflections of the eternal justice, etc., exhibited in mind of greater and less distorting power. Was it worth while introducing these δόξαι to obtain this result? Plato's

<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to quote passages to prove that opinions about right and wrong are opinions: what is necessary is to show that such opinions have any relevance to the present discussion. It may also be pointed out that, while no apology is needed for calling the objects of sense, the ὁρατά, δοξαστά, it is not easy to see why Plato should have called δοξαστά in this general sense ὁρατά.



first equation explains that he proposes to elucidate the relation of sensible and supersensible by means of the relation between the two lower sections of the Line. Is that difference then also "a varying quantity," and may knowledge itself be right or wrong? Surely *πίστις*, if it is to be truly analogous to *ἐπιστήμη*, must be something final and impeccable in its own sphere. It must settle the problems raised by *εἰκασία*, as metaphysics answer the questions provoked by mathematics, and knowledge in general settles the perplexities of sensation.

(b) Adam further refers to the passage in the *Sophist* where Plato tries by the method of *διαίρεσις* to arrive at a definition of the art of sophistry. The reference has an apparent appositeness, since the Sophist is placed in the subdivision of *φανταστική* which Plato calls *εἰκαστική*; and the word *δοξομίμησις* which is used to describe the activity of the Sophist seems at first sight to provide a differentia of *εἰκασία* from *πίστις*, and one particularly appropriate since it introduces in the word *μίμησις* the copy-original relation. But it must be remarked that the parallel is at any rate very inexact. As Adam admits, the *σκίαι* and *εἰδωλα* mentioned in the exposition of the Line would fall in the region of *θεία εἰδωλοποιική* rather than in that of *ἀνθρωπινὴ εἰδωλοποιική*,<sup>1</sup> while the activity of the Sophist falls within the latter division. Again, in the *Sophist* we are concerned with a classification of kinds of creation; and such a classification has no very direct relation to a simile the aim of which is to expound the relation of the world of sense to the world of knowledge. *Εἰκαστική* there is the art of *making* *εἰκόνες*. The inference which Adam draws

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Proclus, *In Plat. Remp.* I. 290, 7 (ed. Kroll).



from this passage is that Plato's enemies—the Sophist and the Artist – will be found in the lowest division of the Line, in the psychological condition of *εἰκασία*. But *εἰκασία* is taken by Adam and others to mean “the state of mind in which *εἰκόνες* are held to be true,” *i.e.* to be not copies but originals. It is however quite impossible to suppose that a man who is actually engaged in imitating something should be convinced that the imitation which he is making is that of which it is the imitation. And even supposing that such an internally contradictory state of mind were possible, the commentator has to make his description of *εἰκασία* square with that of *διάνοια*: and what analogy can possibly hold between this preposterous confusion and the state of mind of the mathematician, who is not occupied in imitating anything, and is not accused of mistaking any *εἰκῶν*, or anything analogous to an *εἰκῶν*, for an original? Nor is the use of the word *εἰκαστική* in the *Sophist* any evidence in favour of this view. It means, certainly, the art of making *εἰκόνες*; but it does not follow that *εἰκασία* means the state of mind of one employed in making *εἰκόνες*.

(c) Finally, there is the passage in the *Philebus* in which Plato, after distinguishing pure and impure pleasures, sets out to establish a similar distinction between pure and impure knowledge. He first divides knowledge into two parts, practical or productive and theoretical or educational. In the practical applications of knowledge he finds a pure element, which is applied mathematics, and an impure element – the skill in guessing which comes with practice: the former is certain and accurate, the latter unreliable and inaccurate; and arts which



rely chiefly on the latter are inferior to those which proceed chiefly by measuring, weighing, and other mathematical devices. Thus music, as an inexact art, is contrasted with the exact art of carpentry. It is then shown that the mathematics involved in these relatively exact arts is after all applied mathematics, with unequal units, etc., and that there is a purer form of mathematics, which is more truly scientific. Finally Dialectic, as the contemplation of Being, is given the first place in the hierarchy of knowledge. Thus we get a fourfold classification, which is in some respects closely parallel to that of the *Republic*. Further, it is pointed out that in *Rep. X.* the maker of a σκεῦος is said to have πίστις ὀρθή, since he acts on the advice of the man who knows — *i.e.* of the user — while the imitator neither knows nor has ὀρθὴ δόξα: "so that," says Adam, "his state of mind can only be εἰκασία." The passage in *Rep. X.*, though in itself quite intelligible, is not very easy to fit into the Line. The bed-maker has the highest form of πίστις, but the bed-user has something better still. Where is he to be placed? He cannot surely be regarded as falling under διάνοια, and if not there is no place for him. But even if that is dismissed, the passage in the *Philebus* remains. The question we have to ask is, What light, if any, does it throw upon the Line? It purports to be a classification of knowledge with respect to its degree of σαφήνεια, just as the proportions of the Line are said to be determined by the relative σαφήνεια of the various objects for which it stands. The two higher divisions, in the *Philebus* as in the *Republic*, are dialectic and mathematics, and the lower element in the lower half is described there as here by the



word εἰκάζειν. But, in spite of these similarities, there is sufficient difference between the two passages to make any inference from the one to the other unconvincing. The classification of the *Philebus* is provoked by Socrates' claim that wisdom and not pleasure is the highest good; while the simile of the Line is an attempt to clear up the relation of the world of sense to the world of knowledge. This difference of purpose is sufficient to account for a difference of treatment, even though the same facts are in a sense the basis of both analyses, and each is in some degree a help to the understanding of the other. But the fact that at first sight the passage in the *Philebus* appears to supplement the exposition of the *Republic* just where it is least detailed – *i.e.* (if the expression is permitted) on the subjective side – filling out the meagre account of the παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς by an analysis of kinds of knowing – this fact should not force us into the uncritical device of simply putting the two passages together on the assumption that they must and in the faith that they will harmonise.

The argument of the *Philebus* distinguishes four kinds of wisdom, dividing applied knowledge of art, inexact and exact, from pure knowledge or science, mathematical and metaphysical. The second of these distinctions – the distinction within pure knowledge of mathematics from metaphysics – is in the *Philebus* far from clear. It is asserted that there is a form of knowing superior to pure mathematics, which is called ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις and deals with τὸ ὄν (57e–58e). The superiority of this study to the study of the changing things of Nature is expounded (59a–b). But so little attempt is made to



differentiate it from pure mathematics, that the ground of its superiority is not stated, and in the recapitulation which precedes the "mixing" the divine circle and sphere are apparently within the cognition of the purest form of knowledge, *i.e.* either of *διαλεκτική*, or of *διαλεκτική* and mathematics taken as together constituting pure knowledge. In short, this part of the division is so far from throwing any light on the parallel division of *νοητά* in the *Republic*, that without the *Republic* it is itself almost unintelligible.

Turning to the arts, to what Plato here calls *δημιουργικὴ ἐπιστήμη* (55d), we find the lower element distinguished from the higher according to the presence or absence of precise mathematical determination, and a resulting separation of relatively exact crafts like carpentry from those which are relatively inexact, like music. This does not in itself suggest a very close connection with the Divided Line of *Rep. VI.* But the answer to the question "What is Art apart from Mathematics?" is, not unnaturally, "guesswork guided by the skill which comes from practice": *τὸ γοῦν μετὰ ταῦτ' εἰκάζειν λείποιτ' ἂν καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις καταμελετᾶν ἐμπειρίᾳ καὶ τινι τριβῇ* (55e): and in the recapitulation the arts not clarified by mathematics were found, it is said, to be full of guesswork and imitation, *στοχάσεως τε καὶ μιμήσεως μεστή.* These words *στόχασις*, *εἰκάζειν*, *μίμησις*, give the commentators the cue, and when further it is remembered that in *Rep. X.* the carpenter who makes a bed is said to have *πίστις ὀρθή*, who can blame them if they cry Heureka? Yet surely it is obvious that the distinction arrived at in the *Philebus* between exact and inexact arts has nothing to tell us about the relation of an image to its original, whether understood literally



or metaphorically, and that it is only looseness of thought which allows it, together with everything else that Plato ever said or might have said about δόξα, to be bundled into the Line. Are we asked to believe that an inexact art is a copy of an exact, that it is a universal characteristic of the products or processes of medicine, husbandry, or generalship, to imitate the products or processes of some form of applied mathematics? And is there any sense in saying that the art of the pilot or the flute-player consists in the apprehension of an εἰκὼν or in mistaking an εἰκὼν for ultimate reality? But if it is nonsense to say these things, then it is also nonsense to say that the distinction involved is the same as that of εἰκασία and πίστις in the *Republic*.

Of the passage cited from the *Philebus*, then, I conclude that this classification of forms of knowledge, while apparently in its two higher divisions corresponding roughly to the higher sections of the Line, has in its lower divisions no direct relevance to the Line at all. The passage in the *Philebus* may truly be said (though omitting much, as Socrates says), to distinguish four levels or stages of intelligence; and it is not surprising therefore that those who regard the Divided Line as a progression have had to fly from the *Republic* to the *Philebus*. But the Line is not a progression, and does not set out to compare four degrees of wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

I now return to the παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς and their interrelations within the Line itself.

<sup>1</sup> With regard to these passages in general, I should say that there is no very clear thread of connection running through them except a strong family likeness, due to the fact that each depends to some extent like the Line on the notion of "copying," a notion of which Plato never seemed to exhaust the suggestiveness.



One point I have already made. If the equation  $A : B :: C : D$  is to mean anything, B ( $\piίστις$ ) must be final as D ( $\ νοῦς$ ) is final. This point is important, and I think it is not sufficiently recognised by the commentators. But not only is it one of the most obvious features of the  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\lambda\omicron\gamma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ; it is also one of the most obvious features of the parallelism, of which the whole of this part of the *Republic* is one long exposition, between the visible and the intelligible world. We have on the one side the sensible, with the visible Sun as lord and  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\rho\alpha\mu\alpha$ , and on the other side the intelligible, with the Good as lord and  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \mu\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\mu\alpha$ . Before the exposition of the Divided Line the point is made in likening the idea of Good to the Sun, and in the following simile of the Cave the final ability of the eye to look upon the Sun in heaven is given as analogous to the final ability of the philosopher to see things as they are.

B and D, then, in their respective spheres, are each final and satisfactory. But their finality is brought out by contrast with the unfinality and unsatisfactoriness of A and C. The lower subsection in each section should be incomplete and unsatisfactory even within its own limits. A consideration of Plato's statements shows this to be the case. A reflection gives us incomplete and unsatisfying evidence concerning the visible nature of the reflected object, and thus engenders in the mind cravings which only the sight of the object itself will set at rest. By analogy mathematics must give us a partial apprehension of the intelligible nature which is fully revealed by philosophy. It is able to draw the mind towards Being just because, as Plato says in the *Philebus* (57d), it is inspired by  $\acute{\eta}\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\omega\varsigma$



φιλοσοφούντων ὁρμή — an impulse which will not be satisfied short of complete knowledge. So far there is a clear parallel between A and C.

The continuity of motive which has been observed between A and B depends upon this, that an εἰκών, when examined, is found to be devoid of significance except as the εἰκών of something, and the perception of animals and the other originals of the εἰκόνες satisfies the mind just because and in so far as the mind was trying to find in the image something which was not there; because, in short, the perception of an εἰκών is the imperfect perception of its original. That this continuity of motive, as I call it, holds also between mathematics and philosophy, Plato certainly means to imply; for the whole value of mathematics as a propaedeutic to philosophy depends upon it. But there would seem to be a difficulty if, as is commonly asserted, the mathematical triangle is something distinct from the εἶδος of triangle. Εἰκασία, the state of mind produced by the contemplation of an εἰκών, is, as we have seen, a partial perception of the sensuous characteristics of the originals of the εἰκόνες: it sees the ζῶον in the εἰκών. Mathematics then, by analogy, knows the εἶδος in that which is to it the εἰκών of the εἶδος. But what is the εἰκών of the mathematician? Plato explains that mathematical science treats the originals of the visible section as εἰκόνες, and thus with the aid of sense proceeds to analyse that which itself is not sensible. Though the mathematician has his eyes fixed upon a visible symbol, it is not that, he says, that he is discussing or trying to understand. But if it is a μαθηματικόν which is not an εἶδος that the mathematician tries to know with



the aid of the diagram, surely the parallelism with the world of sense breaks down. The diagram corresponds to the reflection, but the μαθηματικόν cannot correspond to the ζῶον, since the μαθηματικόν is not what is known in the highest form of knowing, while the ζῶον is what is perceived in the highest form of perceiving. I do not wish to argue that Plato certainly did not believe in the order of μαθηματικά intermediate between the visible thing and the εἶδος: what I am trying to show is that it is rash to assume that such a doctrine is implied in the passage under discussion. What is here required, I urge, of the mathematician is not the adequate conception of a μαθηματικόν with the aid of a diagram, but the partial understanding of an εἶδος with the assistance of a visible symbol. And I venture to think that Plato's words admit most naturally of this interpretation. After explaining that the mathematician has his εἰκὼν Plato says (510b) that philosophy proceeds ἄνευ τῶν περὶ ἐκείνο εἰκόνων αὐτοῖς εἶδεσι δι' αὐτῶν τὴν μέθοδον ποιουμένην. These words, αὐτοῖς εἶδεσι κ.τ.λ., certainly suggest an antithesis between the understanding of an εἶδος with sensuous assistance and the understanding of the intelligible αὐτὸ δι' αὐτοῦ, by and through itself. He points out, it is true, that strictly speaking the mathematician does not really understand the fundamental notions involved in his own science, since he is unable to give an account of them; but that it is of them that philosophy, which knows nothing but forms, will give an account, is never doubted; and how should an enquiry αὐτοῖς εἶδεσι δι' αὐτῶν τὴν μέθοδον ποιουμένην consider that which is not εἶδος but μαθηματικόν? There are other expressions also in this passage which are difficult to explain on the



hypothesis of μαθηματικά. How does τὸ τετράγωνον αὐτό or αὐτὰ ἐκεῖνα . . . ἃ οὐκ ἂν ἄλλως ἴδοι ἢ τῇ διανοίᾳ differ from the αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν or αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο of other passages, so that while the latter stand for εἶδη the former stand for μαθηματικά?

And, more generally, surely if Plato had here meant to expound the distinction of μαθηματικά from εἶδη, he would have explained the ground of that difference. We are told that the distinction rests on the fact that while the μαθηματικά are πολλά, the εἶδος is one. This doctrine is stated by Adam as follows:

“The lower νοητά are mathematical numbers, mathematical plane surfaces, mathematical βάθος, mathematical φορὰ βάθους, and “consonant” mathematical numbers. . . . They are ἀεὶ ὄντα but nevertheless πολλά, i.e. there are many mathematical units, etc. (526a, note), many mathematical triangles, squares, etc., many mathematical cubes, etc., many specimens (if the word may be allowed) of each mathematical φορά, many of each set of ξύμφωνοι ἀριθμοί” (*Rep.* Vol. II., p. 159).

He points out, further, that the ground on which Aristotle supposes Plato to have made the distinction is the plurality of mathematical units, etc., and that this plurality is implied in a passage in *Rep VII.* (526a), supported by a passage in the *Philebus* (56c ff.). In both of these passages the plurality of units is implied (though not in contradistinction to the unity of an εἶδος) when the units of pure mathematics are distinguished from those of applied mathematics as units perfectly equal to one another from units roughly approximate. No passage, as far as I know, is quoted from the surviving works



of Plato explicitly distinguishing μαθηματικά from εἶδη; and no statement is quoted from the exposition of the Line containing even the implicit assertion of the plurality of μαθηματικά. Indeed Adam admits that "a hasty perusal" of the statement, already quoted, about the τετράγωνον αὐτό (510d) "might lead us to suppose that there is only one mathematical square, and even to identify it with the Idea."

Now, it is of course obvious that the geometrician is capable of recognising more than one equilateral triangle, and more than one square; and that without a plurality of this kind – a plurality, that is, not of kinds or species but of *instances* – the demonstration of many geometrical prepositions would be difficult, if not possible. It is clear, I think, secondly, that this kind of plurality, undoubtedly present in geometry as ordinarily pursued, is closely connected with the employment of visible diagrams. It is because the geometrician in some sense recognises particular triangles that there can be several of them, and it is for the same reason that his demonstration is capable of sensuous illustration. Further, the same fact is indubitably a sure ground for a distinction between mathematics and philosophy, if, as seems probable, it is true that no philosophical argument is capable of sensuous illustration. Nevertheless, if we ask what it is that the mathematician comes to know in the demonstration, the answer is either not triangles in the plural at all, or a plurality which is only a plurality of kind or species. A demonstration concerning a square may speak of several squares, and more than one may figure in the diagram, but what is demonstrated is a truth about *the* square,



τὸ τετράγωνον αὐτό; and the plurality of individuals or instances is no more understood and no more intelligible here than in reference to any non-mathematical εἶδος. To the mathematical intelligence, as much as to the philosophical, the only intelligible plurality is plurality of kinds.

But since the two squares which the mathematician talks of are certainly not the figures drawn on paper, and since what is in any way apprehended must in some sense exist, even though as not wholly intelligible it is not wholly real, there is a place possibly for an intermediate order of μαθηματικά between the εἶδη and the things of sense. But if so, it is necessary to walk warily; for these μαθηματικά are not what the mathematician is understanding, except as instances of a universal: what he understands is that which is alone intelligible – the εἶδος itself. Perhaps I may be allowed to illustrate the position by the following words of Hegel (*Logic*: Wallace, II. 27). After explaining the inherent weaknesses of science as contrasted with philosophy, he explains that it may sometimes happen that science is empirical only in form,

“while intuitive sagacity has arranged what are mere phenomena according to the essential sequence of the notion. In such a case the contrasts between the varied and numerous phenomena brought together serve to eliminate the external and accidental circumstances of their conditions and the universal thus comes clearly into view. Guided by such an intuition experimental physics will present the rational science of Nature – as history will present the science of human affairs



and actions – in an external picture, which mirrors the philosophic notion."

This part of the discussion may now be summed up in the following sentence. Just as in one sense the subject of εἰκασία may be said to be the two-dimensional εἰκὼν, but in another sense it is the three-dimensional εἰκαστόν; for it is the latter and not the former which is perceived, when the εἰκὼν is truly apprehended; so here, in one sense the many figures drawn on paper (or if you prefer the many μαθηματικά) are the subject of διάνοια, but in another the one εἶδος itself; for what being they have is derivative from it, and so far as they are understood they are understood as one. Thus my position with regard to the μαθηματικά (if they are correctly described as ἀεὶ ὄντα but πολλά) is that while their introduction into the Line will to some extent confuse the parallelism of A and C, since the εἰκὼν of the mathematician will be both the figure on paper and the μαθηματικόν for which it stands, yet the main point of the equations will remain unaffected so long as it is admitted that what the mathematician achieves is understanding – imperfect indeed but yet understanding – of true Being.

Finally I must consider what light is thrown upon the Line by the succeeding simile of the Cave.

The close connection of this simile with what precedes it is explicitly announced by Plato in 517b, ταύτην τοίνυν τὴν εἰκόνα προσαπτέον ἅπασαν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λεγομένοις. Let us see how far the correspondence is satisfactory. In the simile we are presented with a sensible and (so to speak) an infra-sensible world, and Plato explains that the world of animals and



their reflections presided over by the Sun stands for the intelligible world, while the underground cave lit by the fire stands for the sensible world. The four analogous states therefore are – A. In the Cave: (1) that in which the eyes are fixed upon shadows of puppets: (2) that in which the head is turned round so that the eyes behold the puppets themselves. B. Outside the Cave: (1) that in which the eyes can only bear to see things in their reflections; (2) that in which the eyes are able to face the things themselves and even finally the noon-day sun.

In certain respects these four states correspond closely enough with the four segments of the Line. In particular the relation of image and original offered in the Line as an illustration of the relation of the thought-world to the sense-world is here strikingly presented to the imagination. In the cave the shadows are images of the puppets, and the cave-world as a whole is an image of the world outside. Again, outside the cave, that which is first perceived is an image or reflection of that which is later perceived. The prominence of the image-original relation in the Cave is a clear vindication of the importance of that relation to the understanding of the Line. On the other hand, a failure in correspondence may be noted in that the objects which cast the shadows within the cave are not the same as the reflections of the world without, while it was expressly stated before that the originals of *πίστις* are the *εἰκόνες* of *διάνοια*. But it is easy to see that this defect was unavoidable: and the defect itself is perhaps some corroboration of the unimportance of the relation of the two middle sub-segments of the Line to one another.



The point in the simile of the Cave on which critics are chiefly apt to fasten, when expounding the doctrine of the Line, is that in the Cave the prisoners are so situated that they can see nothing but the shadows, with the result that they assume that these *σκευαστῶν σκία* are self-explaining and independent existences, and that there is no reality beyond them (see 515bc). Here, it will be said, Plato is beyond doubt presenting to us the lowest stage of apprehension as one in which images are taken for reality: therefore no objection can be raised to such an interpretation of *εἰκασία* in the Line.

The apparent conclusiveness of this argument, which has undoubtedly had considerable influence upon interpreters of Plato, is mitigated, I think, by the following considerations. *Εἰκασία* is the *πάθημα τῆς ψυχῆς* or state of mind induced by the contemplation of *εἰκόνες*. Such a *πάθημα* will differ considerably according as the observer knows or does not know that the *εἰκὼν* is an *εἰκὼν*. It is claimed that the lowest level of experience is fairly typified by the picture of men mistaking *εἰκόνες* for real existences, and that we have an instance of such a state of mind in *e.g.* children and savages. In this position, it seems to me, two ideas are confused. On the one hand there is the notion of a savage as of one who, confronted by a shadow or reflection alongside of its original – both being equally accessible to his vision and to that extent discriminated by him – does not distinguish between the being of the one and the being of the other, but thinks each equally substantial: and on the other hand the savage is thought of as one of unclear vision who sees everything in the world through a mist of idle fears and



baseless fancies, and thus, preventing himself from seeing anything as it is, may be said to live in a shadow-world and to be acquainted with nothing but shadows. Of these two notions the first takes εἰκῶν apparently in its literal sense, but fails to confine the savage to a world which is *all* shadow; while the second purchases a shadow-world at the cost of ignoring the literal sense of Plato's words. In any case the two notions are not properly held in combination. For myself, I do not like the instance of the savage. I take it that in no part of the Line (though the same is perhaps not true of the Cave) are we concerned with real wilful error. Undoubtedly many of those who sit and watch these shadows pass along the wall will be liars and cheats and dupes, imposing on others and imposed upon themselves: but, if we are to examine the πάθημα τῆς ψυχῆς induced in the minds of those who watch, let us examine it in a mind which does not distort, in the mind of the awakening philosopher. He would never find salvation at all if he were from the start the victim of a false metaphysic that the shadows before his eyes were the whole of being. He is able to free himself because from the first he fails to find satisfaction in them, and when he has once recognised them to be derivative the first step in his liberation is accomplished. The stages which his thought passes through are stages which thought must necessarily pass through on the road to the πρότερα φύσει: in no part of its course need it involve real error. It is such a progress as this, I maintain, which is suggested in the Line and described in the Simile of the Cave. In such a progress εἰκασία is analogous to διάνοια and πίστις to νοῦς, and fair justice is done



to the picturesque but rather inaccurate imagery of the Cave.

There are several other points connected with the simile of the Cave which it is tempting to discuss here. But I think I will omit them, only saying that it seems to me to be a reversal of the true procedure when critics try to understand the Line by means of the Cave, instead of interpreting the Cave by the Line. The Cave is far less precise in its metaphors than the Line.

Finally, perhaps I may now be allowed to present a short summary of the views which I have tried in the preceding pages to advance. I urged, first, that the essential purpose of the Simile of the Line is to elucidate the dependence of the world of sight upon the world of thought by comparing it to the dependence of a shadow or reflection on the thing shadowed or reflected, and that this relation of copy to original is the key to the whole exposition. Secondly, I tried to show, as consequent upon this, that the implied equations between the objects of apprehension should be the starting-point of exposition, rather than the different states of mind to which those objects give rise. Thirdly, I argued that the notion of a continuous progression was not within the direct intention of the image; though it inevitably tends to creep in when we turn our attention to the four states of mind which in its second intention the Line in its four divisions represents. Fourthly, resisting the attempt to widen the application of Plato's terms by calling in the assistance of some external evidence, I tried to explain the equations involved and show them coherent and consistent among themselves; and to this end I was



obliged to plunge shortly into the controversy as to the separate existence of μαθηματικά, and to discuss possible inferences from the allegory of the Cave. Many of these theses were in form negative and controversial, but I hope that in spite of that fact a positive thesis of some consistency has emerged from the discussion.

In conclusion I may remark that the evidence of Proclus, such as it is, points to a far more literal interpretation of Plato's words about εἰκόνες and εἰκαστά than is fashionable with commentators. He points out, for instance, a fact which commentators do not appear to observe, that while εἰκὼν is a term of wide application, Plato expressly restricts its use in this passage to those εἰκόνες which are due to the action of light (289, 21 *sqq.*). In his exposition of the Cave there is unfortunately a serious lacuna (293, 22) of such dimensions that there only remains part of the explanation of the first and part of the explanation of the fourth level of experience. The only other point in his exposition which is of interest for the present discussion is his continual emphasis on the close connection of these two similes with the preceding comparison of the idea of Good to its ἔκγονος, the Sun. Proclus reminds us that Socrates himself admitted to a fear lest he should present a false account of the τόκος, punning indeed on the word, but "indicating to an audience which heard his lightest jest with attention that analogy is a dangerous weapon in the hands of a teacher," ἐπισφαλὴς ἐστὶ τρόπος διδασκαλίας ὁ διὰ τῆς ἀναλογίας. In that fact is to be found my apology for writing this paper, and also, I hope, an excuse for whatever I have done amiss.



## X

### THE COMPOSITION OF ARISTOTLE'S *POLITICS*<sup>1</sup>

#### I. *General Considerations*

IN considering the question as to the order of composition of different portions of Aristotle's works it is necessary to start (as Jaeger did in his study of the genesis of the *Metaphysics*)<sup>2</sup> with some idea as to his method of composition.

On looking at the surviving works one sees at a glance that at some date and by some hand they have been carefully arranged as a continuous series. Internal references forward and backward are frequent. The author refrains as carefully as Euclid does from anticipating in an "earlier" discussion the answer to a question which will arise "later." The forward references are merely promises that a question will be discussed. These multitudinous cross-references are so interwoven with the thought and the argument that there is little doubt that in the main they are due to Aristotle himself. On the other hand, the short transitional statements with which the "books" as we have them *close* must always be accepted with some reservations. The book is a device of the ancient bookseller, not the unit of composition. Of course, where they could, the editors have made the ends of books correspond with important breaks in the argument; but wholly

<sup>1</sup> *Classical Quarterly*, June-Oct., 1927.

<sup>2</sup> Jaeger, *Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (1912), referred to subsequently by the abbreviation *Entst.*



artificial book-endings do occur. There is, e.g., the end of *N.E.* θ, which corresponds to no important stage in the thought; and here the editor or bookseller has merely emphasised the artificiality of the division by inserting the wholly inappropriate clause, *περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων ἐπὶ τοσοῦτο εἰρήσθω*.

Another reason for distrusting the ends of books is this – that the book filled a roll; and if anything was to be added, clearly the easiest place to insert it was the end of the roll. It would be natural to add a short sentence of transition in the Aristotelian manner, indicating which roll came next. There are several instances of a partial quotation from the first sentence of the roll next following. More common is a Janus-faced sentence of the form *περὶ μὲν οὖν . . . περὶ δὲ* or *λοιπὸν δὲ κ.τ.λ.* And such a sentence may occur at the end of a book, even when the same thought in a fuller form begins the next. But, as Jaeger has shown, more important additions than this are often easily to be detected at the ends of rolls. There is one in the *N.E.* which, I think, Jaeger has not pointed out.

*N.E.* B 9 opens with an elaborate formula of transition of the regular Aristotelian pattern, resuming the discussion of virtue up to the point reached. Starting with *ὅτι μὲν οὖν*, we expect to meet a balancing antithesis with *δέ* stating the next subject of discussion. The balancing *δέ* has its obvious place a page and a half further on, at the beginning of *N.E.* Γ (where Bywater follows our MSS. in printing *δή*). In between come some miscellaneous practical precepts rather lamely introduced by the words *διὸ καὶ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον εἶναι*. There is no reason to deny that the inserted passage is Aristotelian, but there is every reason to doubt



whether it was intended for this place. It was no doubt inserted here to fill up a roll. These considerations as to insertions at the end of rolls apply of course not merely to posthumous editions, but also to Aristotle himself; and not merely to the ends of books, but also to the ends of sections of the argument which fall within the existing books. Aristotle is rather apt to end a discussion with some loosely related paragraphs of the nature of footnotes or addenda.

The units of Aristotle's composition are the μέθοδος and the λόγος. The μέθοδος (in its concrete, not its abstract, sense) is the larger unit, often hardly distinguishable from the πραγμάτεια — i.e. often approximating to the modern "science," as the name for an independent department of enquiry. The bounds of the μέθοδος in the Aristotelian architectonic do not correspond with the bounds of the treatises as we know them. Taking the several groups of his works in order and ignoring minor works, which are either spurious or fall outside the scheme, we find the following μέθοδοι established :

1. Concerning nature (or material nature — *Met.* 1076a 9). This includes *Phys.*, *D.C.*, *G.C.*, *Meteor.* Its subdivisions are not correctly rendered by the present arrangement. The last two books of the *D.C.* belong to the *G.C.*

2. The set of short treatises following *De An.* is called (476b 9) ἡ περὶ τῶν ζώων μέθοδος.

3. The relations of the several zoological treatises is not quite clear, but in *Gen. An.* V. the discussion of the Parts of Animals (which includes *Gen. An.*) seems to be divided into (a) a general explanation, and (b) the explanation of the various forms which



a given part assumes. *Gen. An.* V. in short (called by Zeller a "sort of appendix") is referred to as a separate μέθοδος.

4. The *Metaphysics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics* are each referred to as constituting a separate μέθοδος.

5. The conception of the connection of the Logical Treatises is not very clear, but the *Topics* is apparently regarded as a separate μέθοδος.<sup>1</sup>

6. Inside the *Politics* different μέθοδοι are it seems distinguished:

(a) ΔΕ seem to constitute a μέθοδος, which is described (1293b 30: cf. 1295a 2) as περὶ πολιτείας.

(b) Ζ refers to itself at the beginning (1317a 19) as a new μ., and refers to a passage in Δ as "in the preceding μ." (1317b 34).

(c) Δ refers to a passage in Γ as "in the first μ." (1289a 26).

(d) "This μ." in Η (1324a 3 and 22) seems to refer to the construction of the ideal state, with which ΗΘ are occupied; but the conception might be more general.

With this use of μέθοδος in the *Politics* may be compared *N.E.* 1094b 11, where the μέθοδος (sc. the ethical enquiry as a whole) is said to have the aims stated, and to be a branch or subdivision of πολιτική (πολ. τις οὔσα).

The *Politics* seems to be the only one of our Treatises which is referred to as containing a number of μέθοδοι; but it is perhaps a mere accident that the *Physics* and the *De Caelo* are not similarly broken up.

It will be clear from these instances that μέθοδος is a very fluctuating conception. There is no fixed unit; but the guiding idea is that of a continuous argument,

<sup>1</sup> Compare, however, Jaeger's treatment of this treatise (*Entst.*, p. 151).



which may be divided and subdivided into constituent arguments. Hence, *e.g.*, a reference to what was said "at the beginning" is at almost any point of any of Aristotle's works equivocal, if not more closely defined. In the *Meteorologica*, for instance, it might mean the beginning of that work, or the beginning of the *De Caelo*, or almost any passage in the *Physics*.

Jaeger adopts for convenience the small-scale notion of a μέθοδος, as found in the *Politics*, equivalent to what may be called the common Aristotelian unit of citation, which is in most cases longer than a single book of our text and shorter than any of our larger treatises. A μέθοδος in this sense is not divisible into μέθοδοι, but only into λόγοι.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that this elaborate architectonic in Aristotle's works is in a certain sense artificial. It is impossible to suppose that he actually wrote each component member of the series in the order in which the scheme puts them.<sup>2</sup> The elaborate ordering was rendered possible presumably by the fact that none of the components were published; a new member, therefore, could always be inserted, and suitable adjustments in related sections previously composed were easily made. But if Aristotle's later compositions were directed to filling gaps in this elaborate scheme or rewriting sections of it, it is difficult to attach any great weight to arguments from awkwardness of transition or from the occasional incoherence of cross-references.<sup>3</sup> It is only natural

<sup>1</sup> With the uses of μέθοδος should be compared the uses of the rather wider term πραγμάτεια, see Bonitz, *Ind. Ar. s.v.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Zeller, *Aristotle I.*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.* the *De Motu* and *De Incessu Animalium* are not proved spurious by the fact that the end of *Part. An.* (preceding *M.*) promises an immediate investigation of *Gen. An.* Nor is the *De Incessu* proved spurious by its concluding transition to the *De An.* (or *Parva Naturalia* – reading doubtful).



that such maladjustments should occasionally appear. The wonder is that they do not appear more often. In fact, the rarity of such phenomena makes one think that Aristotle's method of composition was rather more continuous than Jaeger seems to suggest. Jaeger<sup>1</sup> is no doubt right, however, in saying that in regarding Aristotle's works we tend to reverse Aristotle's emphasis. He thought primarily of the smaller unit (call it the *Methodos*), and of the science as a group of related *Methodoi*. We tend to think first of the science which, under a certain mode of treatment, falls into certain divisions. He got to his notion of science, one might say, inductively from the *methodos*; we get to the *methodos* deductively from the science. But then Aristotle was engaged in creating that organisation of knowledge into departments which our thought presupposes.

But however this may be, it is beyond doubt that there is a definite order established by what I have called Aristotle's architectonic, and this order is of course to be taken, not as the order in which the treatises were written, but as the order in which he wished them to be read. Whether he was to read them aloud himself to the students of the Lyceum, or intended merely to put them in the library to serve as text-books for the use either of the fellows or of the students, there seems to be no way of deciding. Jaeger suggests that a quasi-publication for such writings was effected by reading them aloud, in the way Zeno read his discourse on the One and the Many at the beginning of Plato's *Parmenides*. In the house of Pythodorus, as in the School of Plato or Aristotle, the reading was followed by a

<sup>1</sup> *Entst.*, p. 160.



discussion. Socrates demanded a repetition of the first λόγος, and thus began the argument retailed in the Dialogue. The parallel is interesting, and very likely describes correctly the procedure followed in the Academy and Lyceum. But it is worth noting that it does not account for Aristotle's architectonic. Aristotle could hardly rely on keeping a class together long enough to enable him to go through the whole of his didactic works in this way. And one would expect more regularity in the length of the smaller units if all alike were to be treated thus.

Jaeger<sup>1</sup> calls attention to the passage at the end of the *Sophistici Elenchi*, which is of course a "book" of the *Topics*, for corroboration of the view that Aristotle's λόγοι were intended for the lecture-room. "In connection with rhetoric," says Aristotle, "there was an abundance of old material at hand; but on syllogistic inference we had absolutely nothing to say beyond what our own long-continued labour could discover. If your observation convinces you that from this original foundation the enquiry has now been put in a sound state as compared with other disciplines which tradition has matured, it remains as a duty for you all, or for those who have listened to me, to excuse any omissions in the treatment, and to be very grateful for its achievements" (184a 9 sqq.) He takes this to imply, not that the *Topics* consists of lecture notes in our sense of that word, but that it was intended to be recited word for word before the School; and he adds that, in the case of writings thus recited, the members of the School would often possess copies which they had made themselves. Similarly, in Plato, Phaedrus had a copy of a discourse

<sup>1</sup> *Entst.*, p. 144.



which he had heard Lysias give; and Socrates in the *Phaedo* had to rely on the word of one reading from such a copy for the fact that the principle of the rule of reason came from Anaxagoras.

It seems questionable how far it is legitimate to build on this passage and a few corroborative hints. The architectonic seems to me to point rather to the library than to the lecture-room.

## 2. *The Case of the "Politics"*

The case of the *Politics* is clearly very different from that of the *Ethics*, with which it is most closely connected. Of the *Ethics* we have three different versions preserved in the corpus. These are written on a plan which is practically identical: they are pretty well as nearly verbally coincident as the Synoptic gospels, and the most diligent search has failed to find in any one of them conclusive evidence of contamination by later (*e.g.* Stoic) doctrine or terminology. We have only one *Politics*, but this one contains evident inconsequences; and while its parts seem to have changed their order at some time, no rearrangement produces a satisfactory sequence. The two cases are different; but in each the undeniable evidence of doubt and disorder affords an excellent starting-point for the critic who wishes to discriminate the various strata in Aristotle's writings. In both cases clearly the architectonic has not completed its work, and the secrets of the workshop may be revealed.

The two problems are tied together by the close relation of the topics discussed in the two treatises, involving fairly frequent echoes and cross-references.



Further, the alleged fact of the dependence of part of the *Politics* on the *Eudemian* rather than the *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the grounds given for dating that part of the *Politics*, and the body of doctrine thus disengaged becomes cardinal in assessing the line of Aristotle's philosophical development. Other questions enter here. Thus Professor Jaeger in his *Aristoteles* claims that the results he has obtained by a similar analysis of other works, especially the *Metaphysics*, show a development in a similar sense, and thus corroborate, as they are corroborated by, his findings in the field of Ethics and Politics. As no particular line of argument in a question of this kind is ever quite cogent, a good deal depends on constructing such a convergence of probabilities; and Jaeger's case is certainly seen at its best when it is stated as a whole. For that, however, a book would be needed. Here we must ignore the wider issues and concentrate on the narrower. In this paper I shall confine myself to the *Politics*.

### 3. *The Parts of the "Politics" and their Interrelations.*

The major components of the *Politics*<sup>1</sup> are the following μέθοδοι:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1. περὶ οἰκονομίας   | = Bk. A.   |
| 2. περὶ τῶν πρότερον ἀποφηναμένων περὶ πολιτείας               | = Bk. B.   |
| 3. περὶ πολιτειῶν καὶ παρεκβάσεων                              | = Bk. Γ.   |
| 4. περὶ τῶν ἄλλων πολιτειῶν καὶ περὶ φθορὰς καὶ σωτηρίας αὐτῶν | = Bks. ΔΕ. |
| 5. περὶ πολιτειῶν καταστάσεως                                  | = Bk. Ζ.   |
| 6. περὶ τῆς ἀρίστης πολιτείας                                  | = Bks.     |

<sup>1</sup> This list of components, with their titles, is adopted from Jaeger, *Entst.*, p. 156.



The six components may in effect be reduced to five, since ΔEZ clearly belong together, and there is no good reason for separating them.

The case of the *Politics* is, I think, unique among the longer treatises of Aristotle in that each of these five components begins with an introduction, which might well stand as the introduction to the whole. The beginning of each main stage in Aristotle's progress through his immense programme is usually marked by a careful introduction, and each subsection by a more or less elaborate transitional statement. The great groups of related topics which form our main treatises are introduced practically without exception (the two exceptions are, I think, *Hist. An.* and *Top.*) by a general statement, which is made to determine the starting-point of the discussion. The subordinate divisions begin normally with a sentence or paragraph which is partly retrospective and partly prospective. (In such cases, where the Greek allowed of it, the editors have often divided the sentence, so that the *μέν*-clause ends one book and the *δέ*-clause begins another.) There is no retrospect at the beginning of any of these sections of the *Politics*; there is no statement that such and such questions remain to be dealt with. Each seems to make a completely independent start.

As for the ends of the sections:

1=A ends with a rather lame but elaborate apology (too elaborate to be due to an editor) for not completing the programme which the preceding discussion would seem to foreshadow, and announces the subject of B.

2=B ends with a *μέν*-clause, and should therefore be followed by a book beginning with a *δέ*-clause.



It is worth noting that the only one of the other sections which could fulfil this requirement is the last. At the beginning of H *περὶ* δέ has some MS. authority.

3=Γ ends by announcing that its sequel will be the discussion of the ideal state and also with a garbled fragment of the first sentence of H. This proves beyond dispute that at some date H followed Γ.

4-5 =ΔEZ ends once more with a *μέν*-clause, which without a δέ at the beginning of H, which follows, has no justification.

It is necessary, further, to note the internal cross-references.

*Back References* (I include only references within a Methodos to a passage outside it):

*M.* 1=A has none.

*M.* 2=B has none.

*M.* 3=Γ refers twice to the *πρῶτοι λόγοι*. One reference is clearly to A, which is referred to as *περί οἰκονομίας καὶ δεσποτείας*. The other is equally clearly to the opening discussion of Γ concerning the identity of the good man and good citizen.

In *M.* 4-5=ΔEZ there are eleven more or less certain references to Γ. This is referred to in Δ (89a 26) as *πρώτη μ. π. τῶν πολιτειῶν*, (89a 31) as the discussion of aristocracy and kingship, (90a 1) as the discussion of aristocracy (doubtful), (93b 2) as *πρῶτοι λόγοι*—the subject again aristocracy, (93b 27) as *τὰ κατ' ἀρχήν* (ref. *παρεκβάσεις*), (95a 4) as *πρῶτοι λόγοι* (kingship). The other references are less specific (*e.g.* *εἴρηται πρότερον* or *πολλάκις*).

In this portion of the *Pol.* there is no clear reference to B, though there are several passages (*e.g.* Sparta, Carthage) in which such a reference might have been expected. There is also no reference to A.



In *M.* 6=HΘ there are six back references in all. There is a definite reference to the discussion of slavery in A (as *πρῶτοι λόγοι*, 25a 30). Another unmistakable reference to Γ, also called *πρῶτοι λόγοι*, (33a 4). A reference to B is generally accepted in the phrase with which the main topic of H is introduced. "I have discussed other forms of government," says Aristotle, "now for ἡ κατ' εὐχὴν πόλις." No doubt a very general statement, which might apply to any or every other part of our *Politics*; but the phrase is almost identical with the opening words of B, where *κατ' εὐχὴν* is in similar opposition to *αἱ ἄλλαι πολιτεiai*. We may call this, then, a reference to B. The other three references are all vague (*εἴρηται πολλάκις* in every case) and will bear no weight. The subjects, however, are such that, while B may be partly in mind, none of our other four (or three) *μέθοδοι* can be. There is no shadow of a reference in HΘ to ΔΕΖ.

On the face of it these references (a) closely connect ΔΕΖ with Γ; but since by one clear reference Γ presupposes A, we get the sequence ΑΓΔΕΖ. (b) Secondly, they exhibit a rather weaker connection between HΘ and all the first three books. (c) Thirdly, they reveal complete disconnection between HΘ and ΔΕΖ. It must be remembered that the references do not in any case settle the order of composition; they only reveal the plan on the basis of which the books were composed. Taken in this sense, these references show that the books of our *Politics* embody no single clearly defined plan, but oscillate between different plans.

So far we have considered only the back references. There are also the forward references to be taken into account and the external evidence.



*Forward References.*—I find eighteen forward references<sup>1</sup> in the *Politics*. These are all of course promises to treat a certain topic. Of these eighteen promises the editors find only three to be fulfilled. Of the three fulfilled promises two are in B, and are said to be fulfilled in Γ (monarchy) and Δ (mixture of monarchy and democracy) respectively. The other is in Δ, and since it is fulfilled in the next book (*i.e.* within the same μέθοδος) it should not really count. There remain fifteen unfulfilled promises distributed between my six divisions as follows: 1 (A) 1, 2 (B) 3, 3 (Γ) 1, 4 and 5 (ΔEZ) 2, 6 (HΘ) 8. I think it is pretty certain that practically all of these promises were to be fulfilled in the treatise on the ideal city, of which we possess only the beginning (HΘ). This is obviously to be assumed in the case of the eight promises made in books HΘ; for it is clear that the outline of the ideal city was to end the political series. But it is significant that there are only two promises in the section ΔEZ, and that neither of these could very well have been fulfilled in a treatise on the ideal city. These are the following:

Δ 1300b 5: "These are the different modes of constituting magistrates, and these correspond to different forms of government. Which are proper to which, or how they ought to be established, will be evident when we determine the nature of their powers."

Z 1316b 35: At the beginning of Z Aristotle says he will consider the modes of organisation proper to each kind of democracy. This is actually the

<sup>1</sup> In the number eighteen I have included all forward references which seem to point beyond the book in which they occur. The passages are: A 1260b 10; B 1265b 17, 66a 24, 69a 29, 71a 20, 72a 25; Γ 1276a 31; Δ 1296a 6, 1300b 7; Z 1317a 4; H 1324a 2, 26b 33, 30a 5, 30a 32, 35b 3, 36b 25; Θ 1338a 33, 41b 38.



subject of the early part of Z. Then he adds: "Moreover, we ought to consider the various combinations of these modes themselves: for such combinations make constitutions overlap one another so that aristocracies have an oligarchical character, and constitutional governments incline to democracies."

Clearly these two promises might have been fulfilled in close connection with one another, but hardly in a sketch of the ideal constitution. The two passages are clear evidence that Aristotle had in mind a continuation of  $\Delta EZ$  which was not identical with  $H\Theta$ .

*External Evidence.*—References to the *Politics* in other works of Aristotle are scanty. In the architectonic order its place is so late that this is almost inevitable. Only three passages need be mentioned, and only one is of any importance:

1. There is a rather vague reference back to the *Politics* in *Rhet.* A (1366a 21). The reader is referred to it for a detailed account of "the moral qualities and institutions peculiar to the various forms of government." The whole middle portion of the *Politics* from  $\Gamma$  to Z might be held to be intended here.

2. Secondly, there is the passage in *N.E.* E (1130b 26), in which the relation of politics to education is reserved for subsequent discussion. Here the primary reference seems to be to the discussion at the end of *N.E.* K, but in view of the concluding clause (οὐ γὰρ ἴσως ταῦτόν ἀνδρί τ' ἀγαθῷ εἶναι καὶ πολίτῃ παντί) a secondary reference may be suspected to *Pol.*  $\Gamma$ .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Whoever wrote this clause must surely have had the discussion of our *Pol.*  $\Gamma$  in mind. There is no reason to suppose it a later addition. Probably, then, *Pol.*  $\Gamma$  is earlier than *N.E.* E: but what is the date of *N.E.* E?



3. The only important passage is the diffuse but interesting discussion which forms the last chapter of *N.E. K*. This ends by promising a *Politics* in three parts, which will complete the philosophic exposition of things human (*ἡ περὶ τὰ ἀνθρωπεῖα φιλοσοφία*). First, he will survey the opinions of his predecessors, or such as seem worth notice. Secondly, on the basis of the collection of constitutions, he will consider the means by which cities and the various types of constitution are preserved and destroyed, and the reasons for their good or ill conduct. Thirdly, with these investigations as his guide, he will determine the character of the best constitution, the best organisation of each constitution (*πῶς ἐκάστη ταχθεῖσα sc. ἀρίστη*), and the laws and customs appropriate to it.

In this triple bill the first item is attempted in *B*. The second corresponds well with *ΔΕΖ*, to which at least the middle portion of *Γ* (classification of constitutions) is an appropriate introduction. The correspondence of the third item with *ΗΘ* is more doubtful. It does not appear to announce a treatise on the ideal city of the size and character exemplified by *ΗΘ*, but rather a reasoned choice among the alternative possibilities set out under the second head, and itself including alternatives (*πῶς ἐκάστη ταχθεῖσα*). It is very significant that the investigation suggested by these words is one in which the two unfulfilled promises of *ΔΕΖ* would naturally find fulfilment. Finally, as all the commentators observe, there is no place in the scheme for our first book. Here, then, once more we have a promise which was unfulfilled, or of which the execution has not been preserved. But we have also a possible explanation of the traditional order of the eight books. If Aristotle's



political MSS. did not clearly determine their own order (and, as we have them, they do not), an editor, with this passage before him, would be almost certain to arrange them in their present sequence. A becomes an introduction to an introduction.

Generally this passage corroborates the impression, derived from the internal references, that  $\Delta EZ$  and  $H\Theta$  belong to two different plans for a *Politics*. It also gives obvious ground for the view that of these two plans that to which  $\Delta EZ$  belong was the later. The reason is the reference to the collection of constitutions as the basis of that part of the plan to which those books correspond. Further than that it is not necessary to go at present.

#### 4. *Jaeger's View*<sup>1</sup>

Let us now state shortly Jaeger's theories as to the order of the composition of the various sections of the *Politics*, together with some further arguments which he brings forward.

1. First he argues for the priority of  $H\Theta$ . In addition to the class of arguments already considered, which could be amplified in detail, he points out that the Platonic precedent would make it natural for Aristotle to begin at least by conceiving the political problem as primarily the problem of constructing an ideal city as a means to the realisation of the best life – *i.e.* in close dependence on ethics.  $H\Theta$  clearly satisfy this *a priori* expectation. He further emphasises the dependence of the early part of  $H$  on the dialogues (especially the *Protrepticus*), and argues that the ethical doctrines cited are

<sup>1</sup> Jaeger's opinions are most fully expressed in his *Aristoteles* (1923), Chap. VI. Cf. also his discussion of the *Protrepticus* in Chap. IV., and his article in the *Hibbert Journal* of January, 1927 ("Aristotle's *Politics*").



reminiscent rather of the *Eudemian* than of the *Nicomachean Ethics*; and he has already satisfied himself that the *Eudemian* is the older version.

He suggests further, as I think most convincingly, that the concluding passage in *N.E.* K and the elaborate introduction to *Pol.* Δ are best interpreted as representing the careful statement of a change of attitude of which Aristotle was conscious. The theoretical basis is no longer sufficient by itself: there is a mass of empirical data to be mastered; there are more practical problems to be considered; and even the question of the best state will be focussed more clearly if the empirical evidence is kept in mind. These passages, in short, represent the partial surrender of the standpoint from which HΘ were composed.

2. With HΘ clearly must be reckoned B. The general conception of the enquiry is the same. This hardly needs arguing in detail.

3. (Here the ground to my mind becomes more insecure.) He argues that the first book of the original treatise was the present Γ. He gives two main grounds:

(a) Internal references: There are in the *Pol.* six references to the *πρῶτοι λόγοι*, one to the *πρῶτη μέθοδος*, and one to *τὰ κατ' ἀρχὴν*. Of these eight passages two point definitely to A, the other six fairly certainly to Γ, and in any case none of these six can refer to A. But the distribution of these passages is rather baffling. If the original *Politics* was ΓBHΘ, one would expect HΘ to call Γ the *πρῶτοι λόγοι*; but in fact H in different passages refers unmistakably both to A and to Γ by this name. If Γ is the original Book I, it should not refer to *πρῶτοι λόγοι* at all, but in



fact it does so twice: once the reference is to A, and once to the introductory portion of itself. These difficulties do not escape Jaeger. He finds himself obliged to treat the two references to A as later additions, and the remaining six as evidence that  $\Gamma$  originally stood first. I think this cannot be regarded as a very strong argument.

(b) His second argument for joining  $\Gamma$  with BH $\Theta$  is based on doctrine. He cites some ten or more passages, in which  $\Gamma$  seems to him to represent a point of view akin rather to that of these books than to the realism of  $\Delta EZ$ . This is not the place to examine these passages. They are to my mind by no means conclusive, but they certainly carry considerable weight.

Jaeger's treatment of  $\Gamma$  seems to me open to criticism on two grounds :

(i.) It seems doubtful whether he is right in treating it as unitary. It has three independent parts. The discussion of monarchy with which the book concludes is loosely related to the sections which precede, and it is the last paragraph of this section which refers to the first section of the book as the *πρῶτοι λόγοι*. But it must be admitted that  $\Delta$  refers to this section, as well as to the middle section of the book, as belonging to the *πρῶτοι λόγοι*.

(ii.) He does not point out the frequency of back references from  $\Delta EZ$  to  $\Gamma$ . These prove beyond the shadow of doubt, if any argument can be based on references at all, that  $\Delta EZ$  presuppose  $\Gamma$  as preceding them. Thus, however long before  $\Delta EZ$   $\Gamma$  may have been written, it was evidently to remain a constituent of the whole for which  $\Delta EZ$  were intended.



We thus get an "*Urpolitik*" consisting of ΒΓΗΘ, composed before Aristotle set up his School at Athens. Jaeger supposes it to belong, with the *Eudemian Ethics* and certain portions of the *Metaphysics* (e.g. Λ), to Aristotle's first period of independent teaching at Assos, under the protection of Hermias, in the years following Plato's death.

4. Finally, as head of the Lyceum, Aristotle set on foot great schemes of organised research, including the set of memoranda on the constitutions of Greece. This led him to the new conception of Political Science outlined in the Appendix to *N.E. K.* In accordance with this plan Books ΔΕΖ were written; and, last of all, (5) our present first book was written as a general introduction to the whole. The arguments for putting ΔΕΖ late are obvious and need not be stated. The case of Α is not argued at length. There is the argument from the passages in which Γ is referred to as *πρῶτοι λόγοι*; and there is also an argument based on the last chapter of the book. The consideration of the three relations, master-slave, husband-wife, father-children, is not completed; and in the last chapter Aristotle excuses himself from dealing with the second and third on the ground that these will have to be dealt with *ἐν τοῖς περὶ τὰς πολιτείας*. Some editors take this to mean the subject of Γ (classification of constitutions), though the topic is not actually there raised. Jaeger takes it to refer to Β, which had, he supposes, already been written, and contained in Aristotle's opinion sufficient discussion of marriage and the family in the criticisms of Plato's communism. This argument, however, if accepted, only shows that Α was composed after Β.



This assumption of a late date for A seems to me the weakest element in Jaeger's view. Surely, if it had been written last, it would have been more closely adapted to the earlier-written portion which it was to precede.

### 5. *Von Arnim's View*<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the publication of Jaeger's *Aristoteles* Professor von Arnim published a work of 310 pages in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Vienna Academy concerned with the genesis of the *Politics* alone. The method employed by Von Arnim is that of a careful and detailed dissection of the argument, especially of  $\Gamma$ . Hence the discussion is apt to lose itself somewhere in detail, and it is difficult to be sure that one has seized the main points. In any case it is impossible here to follow Von Arnim into detail: we must content ourselves with an attempt to state the general lines of his argument.

Agreeing with Jaeger that the two groups  $\Delta EZ$  and  $BH\Theta$  are independent of one another and belong to different stages in Aristotle's thought, he disagrees with him on nearly every other point. He argues at length against Jaeger's conception of an *Urpolitik* consisting of  $B\Gamma H\Theta$ . These four books, he maintains, form no sort of unity either in point of form or in point of doctrine. The main question here is obviously the relation of  $\Gamma$  to  $H\Theta$ . In point of form it is evident, and probably would not be contested by Jaeger, that  $\Gamma$  is not, as it stands, a satisfactory prolegomena to  $H\Theta$ . Clearly the programme which

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der aristotelischen Politik*, 1924 (Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Ph.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, Band 200, 1).



it adumbrates is not fully executed. At the end of the book only monarchy has been discussed. The formal defect must be admitted, and that makes the transition to the ideal city with which the book closes hard to explain. More important is the alleged inconsistency of doctrine. Von Arnim finds an inconsistency in the constitutional conceptions of the two μέθοδοι. The constitution implied in HΘ is neither monarchy nor aristocracy nor democracy; it is, in short, not an ὀρθὴ πολιτεία, as that conception is defined in Γ. Further, the ideal city of HΘ is relatively democratic in character: its citizens are all alike to rule and be ruled in turn (1332b 26). The ideal of Γ, on the other hand, is aristocratic – a government in which, as the last chapter says, the rulers, whether one or more, excel the subjects in virtue, and each are fit, the rulers to rule and the subjects to be ruled.

By way of substantiation, Von Arnim surveys the argument of Γ in detail. In the course of his survey he meets passages which seem to detract from the rigour of this aristocratic ideal. The chief of these are – (1) chap. 5, in which Aristotle seems to him to countenance, if not adopt, the view that a full citizen is one who both rules and is ruled; (2) chap. 11, in which Aristotle bases a relative defence of democracy on the hypothesis of a summation of gifts. These and other such passages are taken to be later insertions from Aristotle's own hand. He finds also many indications that our Γ is a highly abbreviated version of the original Γ. In the original in particular the topic of aristocracy was fully expounded.

By these and other arguments Von Arnim satisfies himself that Γ does not belong to BHΘ. He then develops the complementary argument that Γ does



belong to the group ΔEZ. He argues (in my opinion correctly, as I have already indicated) that Δ offers itself as a continuation of Γ. He argues further that Δ maintains the same aristocratic ideal as Γ. The only evidence offered for this is the retrospective passage at the beginning of Δ (chap. 2), in which, after recalling the three true forms of government and their three perversions, Aristotle says: "Of kingly rule and aristocracy we have already spoken, for the enquiry into the perfect state is the same thing with the discussion of the two forms thus named, since both imply a principle of virtue provided with external means": *βούλεται γὰρ ἑκάτερα κατ' ἀρετὴν συνεστάναι κεχωρηγημένην*.

We thus get the two groups BHΘ and ΓΔEZ. Two questions remain: (1) What of A? and (2), What is the relative date of the various sections?

1. Book A: The question of A is only shortly treated. Von Arnim argues that it is earlier than Γ, (1) first, on the ground of the explicit citation from it in Γ of the principle that man is a *ζῷον πολιτικόν*. (2) Secondly, he argues that, if the discussion of *κτῆσις* and *χρηματιστική*, which occupies chaps. 8-11, is removed, the argument of A forms a fitting introduction to that of Γ, and points to the same aristocratic ideal of government. Monarchy and aristocracy, corresponding to the relations of father and children, man and wife, would emerge as the natural forms of dominion.

The transition to B at the end of the book he regards as a later interpolation, not from Aristotle's hand. The book is mutilated, and in its original form proceeded to complete the programme outlined in the opening sentence of the present concluding paragraph.



A, then, is the introduction to the series ΑΓΔΕΖ.

2. Lastly, as to the relative date of the various sections.

Von Arnim argues generally for the priority of the aristocratic ideal, as nearer to the Platonic point of view than the relatively democratic version of ΗΘ, and in particular seeks to show the dependence of *Pol. Γ* on Plato's *Politicus*. Α and Γ he thinks were certainly composed before Aristotle's return to Athens in 335-4.

Though he has argued that Δ is a genuine continuation of Γ, he agrees that the attitude of the two books is very different, and supposes that there was a considerable interval of time between their composition. In this interval the collection of constitutions was made, and no doubt the difference of attitude and method in Δ is due to this intervening enterprise. He therefore attributes ΔΕΖ to the first five years of Aristotle's Lyceum period.

During the work on ΔΕΖ he thinks that Aristotle became dissatisfied with his former conception of the ideal city and set to work on a new statement. Thus arose the three books ΒΗΘ about the year 330 or later. He gives no grounds other than those already suggested for making ΗΘ late; but in Β he finds two historical references, one to events in Crete and one to events in Sparta, which he places in 332 and 331 respectively.<sup>1</sup> Both of these references occur in the second part of Β, in the discussion of the Spartan and Cretan constitutions, which might well have

<sup>1</sup> The two passages are 1270b 12 (Sparta) and 1272b 20 (Crete). Newman suggests 333 B.C. (hesitatingly) as the date of the events referred to in the former, and 345 B.C. (or, less probably, 333 B.C.) for the latter (Vol. II., pp. 333 and 360). In the former passage Von Arnim suggests that the MS. reading *ἀνδρῶν* (*ἀντρῶν*, etc.,) conceals the word *Ἀντιπατρῶν*.



been written quite independently of the first part. Von Arnim in fact thinks that the criticism of the *Republic* is probably a good deal older than the rest of the book.

### 6. Conclusion

Now, having taken evidence, let us assume for convenience the right to give judgment and pronounce shortly on the questions at issue.

1. I regard it as proved beyond reasonable doubt that  $\Delta EZ$  and  $H\Theta$  belong to different plans for a *Politics*; that  $H\Theta$  represents the earlier plan and  $\Delta EZ$  the later; that the date of  $\Delta EZ$  is approximately the same as that of *N.E. K*; and that  $H\Theta$  was left unfinished because of the change of plan.  $H\Theta$ , in short, was scrapped by Aristotle: its survival is probably due to the fact that the section which was to be substituted for it was never written.

2. As to B, it seems to me a probable inference from the character of this book (but more especially of the early part of it) that it is early in date and goes with  $H\Theta$ ; and also from the silence of  $\Delta EZ$  that it was to be scrapped. But, as to this, the evidence of *N.E. K* points the other way. I suggest, therefore, that it was a stone from the earlier building which Aristotle was prepared to fit into his new scheme; and perhaps the section on Crete and Sparta was added at the later date.

3. As to  $\Gamma$ , our witnesses agree that this is early, though for different and partly contradictory reasons. It is certainly presupposed by  $\Delta EZ$ , and probably presupposed by  $H\Theta$ ; but the more frequent references to it in  $\Delta EZ$  than in  $H\Theta$  are fully explained by the nature of the subjects discussed in these two



sections. I think there is little doubt that it is early; and, indeed, I am inclined to think that it is the earliest of any of the main components. The point about aristocracy, which Von Arnim was not the first to make, is important. The identification of monarchy and aristocracy, as different applications of the same criterion of ἀρετή, is Platonic (*e.g. Rep. IX. 587d*: (ὁ δέ γε ὀλιγαρχικὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ τρίτος, εἰς ταῦτ' ἄριστοκρατικὸν καὶ βασιλικὸν τιθώμεν). But it may be doubted whether Von Arnim makes the right use of this point. He thinks that the original Γ concluded with a discussion of ἀριστοκρατία. He does not see that, if this *identity* is conceded, a separate discussion of ἀριστοκρατία is unnecessary. He notes with surprise that Ε in its concluding paragraph admits the possibility that a πλῆθος may rule by the title of ἀρετή (1288a 35: ἢ ἓνα συμπάντων ἢ γένος ὅλον ἢ πλῆθος ὑπερέχον εἶναι κατ' ἀρετήν). He would eject this, or understand it as a rather large number, because he will not face the argument as a whole, or admit that Aristotle's relative defence of democracy provides for popular government, suitably restricted, as the ideal solution of the political problem under certain conditions. It seems to me plain that when Aristotle wrote Ε he accepted the Platonic formula, taking ἀριστοκρατία, after Plato, as the rule of the best, but stretched it in this direction, and that, consequently, there is no contradiction between Γ and ΗΘ.

Γ, then, belongs to both plans. The concluding transition to ΗΘ merely shows that it was never fully revised to fit the later plan. But as the later plan was only partly executed, this is quite natural.

4. Lastly, as to Α. Α remains, I confess, to me a puzzle. I can see no clear evidence for dating it.



But I would make a tentative suggestion as to its architectonic place. I do not see why it should not be regarded as a treatise on Economics, introductory to a treatise on Politics proper. The *Œconomica* we possess is probably due to Theophrastus, and the lists of Aristotle's works record a single book on Economics. There are difficulties in this suggestion, and its total omission in the plan sketched in *N.E.* K is hard to explain. But this would account for the fact that it and  $\Gamma$  are indifferently referred to as *πρῶτοι λόγοι*. For whatever purpose A was written, it seems to me evident that it was unfinished, and has been rather clumsily and hastily joined on to its present sequel. This fact would suggest (as Von Arnim observes) that it belonged originally to the earlier rather than the later plan. If it had been written *for* its sequel, it would surely have been better adapted to it.



## XI

### THE GOLDEN MEAN<sup>1</sup>

#### I

A FAMOUS phrase with a long history, such as that which stands at the head of this page, is apt to carry a certain savour or quality of its own, largely independent of its actual historical associations. To my ear at least, "The Golden Mean" has a quite pleasant, but rather trivial quality, recalling by its immediate suggestions no ardour of speculation, no energy of theoretical or other enterprise, but rather the worldly wisdom of a cultured and contented circle, secure in the possession of the best that the life of its time had to offer. We think at once of the Augustan age of ancient Rome, or of its parallel (as we often regard it) in our own eighteenth century. It is perhaps fitting then to introduce what I have to say by two quotations from this period of English literature, which fall in with what I take to be the immediate suggestions of the phrase.

The first belongs to the middle of the eighteenth century. It is from a poem by the successful Irish adventurer, George Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcombe, a "person of importance in his day," as Browning reminds us. The poem is to be found in the Oxford Book of English Verse under the title "Shorten Sail."

*Love thy country, wish it well,  
Not with too intense a care;*

<sup>1</sup> *The Monist*, April, 1931.



*Tis enough that when it fell  
Thou its ruin didst not share.*

So the poem begins. It proceeds to recommend indifference to envy and flattery, and generally virtue, as the clue to the "dangerous maze" of life.

*Void of strong desire and fear,  
Life's wide ocean trust no more;  
Strive thy little bark to steer  
With the tide, but near the shore.*

On these terms, the poet tells us, our "shortened sail" will bring us by an easy passage to the port of Peace—

*Easy shall thy passage be,  
Cheerful thy allotted stay,  
Short the account twixt God and thee,  
Hope shall meet thee on thy way.*

My second quotation is earlier in date. It falls in fact outside the eighteenth century altogether. It is taken from the conclusion of Halifax's brilliant political essay, *The Character of a Trimmer*, published in 1688.

"Our Trimmer, therefore (writes Halifax), inspired by this divine virtue, thinks fit to conclude with these assertions – That our Climate is a Trimmer, between that part of the world where men are roasted and the other where they are frozen; That our Church is a Trimmer, between a frenzy of Platonic visions and the lethargic ignorance of Popish dreams; That our laws are Trimmers, between the excess of unbounded power and the extravagance



of liberty not enough restrained; That true virtue hath ever been thought a Trimmer, and to have its dwelling in the middle between the two extremes; That even God Almighty is divided between his two great attributes, his mercy and his justice. In such company our Trimmer is not ashamed of his name; and willingly leaveth to the bold champions of either extreme the honour of contending with no less adversaries than Nature, Religion, Liberty, Prudence, Humanity, and Common Sense."

These, with innumerable other similar utterances, derive of course ultimately from the Aristotelian doctrine of the Mean. Bubb Dodington's unheroic counsel of Safety First, and Halifax's witty plea for compromise as the ultimate political principle — both alike, so far as they appeal to authority, would appeal to the authority of Aristotle, to the wise empiricist who revolted against the high-flying fancies of his master, Plato. They would be speaking in a familiar tradition, as to the sources of which they did not trouble themselves. I do not suppose that either of them was much of a Greek scholar. Without going to Aristotle himself, they might have found in Milton's *Areopagitica* a much truer version of the celebrated doctrine. In a leading passage of his eloquent plea for unlicensed printing, Milton had argued that virtue cannot be created by removing occasion for vice, since it consists in right choice by one who is free to choose between good and evil. "Wherefore," he asks, "did he [God] create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue? . . . Suppose we could expel sin by this means; look how much we thus



expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike." There is nothing, however, here to tell the uninstructed reader that the doctrine is that of Aristotle, or to connect it with the mean. And, in the whole history of English literature who is there fit to stand beside Milton as a scholar? On this point, further, his voice sounds alone in all the centuries. Our first two quotations may seriously misrepresent the sense and spirit of the original doctrine, but they must be allowed to stand as typical of the repute in which it stood.

## 2

But it is with the doctrine itself, not the popular travesty of it, that I am now concerned. I want to state it in what I take to be its fundamentals and consider briefly its value as a contribution to the theory of conduct. I ought, however, first to say that it is not distinctively Aristotelian, even in its ethical form. It is part of a general metaphysical doctrine of universal application, which did not originate with Aristotle or even with Plato, but is a characteristic feature of the main current of the Greek philosophical tradition. In expounding his ethical doctrine Aristotle seems to claim that he is only developing notions which are commonplaces of the schools. It is pretty certain from a number of passages in the Platonic dialogues that a similar ethical doctrine was current in the school of Plato. And the parallels in other quarters are sufficient to justify the assertion that in its essence the doctrine received something like general acceptance and may



be taken as forming a part of the typical Greek view of life.

I will begin with two illustrative analogies which Aristotle himself uses – first, that of a work of art, and secondly, that of bodily health.

Of a work of art, he says, it is commonly observed that nothing can be added or taken away. It is, or strives to be, complete; and this completeness depends on the maintenance of due proportion between the parts or factors which together compose it. Each component must be right in quantity if the result which we call beauty is to be achieved. Strengthen or weaken the colour, increase or diminish the size of this or that; and the total effect is lost or damaged. Thus art is seen to maintain its footing precariously on a razor's edge between too much and too little: by innumerable delicate quantitative adjustments it reaches its goal. Beauty is no doubt a quality, not a quantity; but the quality is reached and realised through quantity.

A similar result emerges from an analysis of bodily health and its maintenance. In the human body opposites are always at war, dry with moist, warm with cold, and health depends on the maintenance of the balance of power, on due mixture or temperament. Within certain narrow limits the balance may change, the proportions alter, as summer and winter succeed one another in the sequence of the seasons; but beyond these limits disease begins. Heat must not be allowed to establish a tyranny over a part of the body, as when one has an inflamed finger, or over the whole organism, as when a man is in a fever. Such encroachments of contrary on contrary are eventually destructive of the organism.



Now health is not just this balance of opposites. It must be defined positively as the discharge of certain functions; and such discharge of function cannot be expressed in quantitative ratios. But this performance of function is continuously conditioned by the maintenance of certain quantitative ratios in the material substratum concerned.

Two striking sayings of an earlier generation are brought together in these observations. Heracleitus had found the formula of substance in the "adjustment of opposed tensions, as of the bow and the lyre." And the famous sculptor Polycleitus, in the only surviving sentence of his *Canon*, is reported to have said: "that which is well comes into being little by little by means of many numbers." In terms of Aristotle's favourite phraseology of matter and form, the generalisation which these examples are meant to suggest is this: that, in order to impose form on matter, all that is needed is to adjust quantitatively the material ingredients: from such adjustment form emerges.

It is perhaps worth noting here, before we go on to the ethical application, that there is another aspect of human life in which Aristotle seems to find this principle at work. The analysis of sensation in his psychology is carried out by means of terms similar to those used in the analysis of virtue. Sensation also is called a mean: sensitive activity requires a balance of opposites in the organ, in the medium, and in the stimulus; its enemies also are thus excess and defect, which beyond a certain point preclude the sensitive activity and may eventually impair or destroy the sense organ. The detail of the argument is somewhat obscure, and Aristotle gives



no indication in either treatise that he is conscious of an identity of principle in his treatment of the two problems. But the identity of principle is there, and Aristotle's unconsciousness of it (if he was unconscious of it) is only further evidence of how deep-rooted this general conception was in his thought.

To secure the outline of the ethical doctrine, all we need to do is to specify the matter and the form involved; and, since the form gives the end, there will remain only the fourth of Aristotle's causes, the stimulus or efficient cause. We shall have to ask then further, what guides or controls as from without, the process of development, the process, as we might say, of information.

The form to be realised is of course virtue, or, more precisely, virtuous character. For virtuous conduct requires according to Aristotle a right state of the intelligence as well as of the character, and it is the development of character that is to be described as a mean, not that of the intelligence. Now character lives in its expression, which is action. Thus the material is the material of action, which is twofold, external and internal. We see an act as an external movement, and we find efficient action where the visible movements are duly co-ordinated in view of some foreseen issue. But we have reason to know also that this external control is preconditioned by an internal discipline which reduces to order the wayward impulses of man's emotional or passionate nature. Thus it is man's desires and emotions which constitute primarily the matter in which virtue of character is to be realised. As long as we remember that the external expression is



always involved, we may put it on one side and think of this excellence of character as manifested in desire and emotion.

Simplifying the question thus, we are asked by Aristotle's principle to accept this ruling: that these desires and emotions are neither good nor bad, but are material, in itself neutral, out of which, by certain different arrangements and adjustments to environment, what we call goodness and badness is made: that the positive achievement which we call goodness comes, not by elimination of certain elements as bad, or by the introduction of some new factor which is the soul of goodness, but simply by the right arrangement and adjustment of these materials. There is, as Aristotle amply recognises, a further factor to be reckoned with here, the tenacity of the organism which makes such things as skill and habit possible. To this factor we owe it that we have some security for the maintenance and repetition of such achievements as good action or the healthy functioning of the human body. But, looked at in its momentary character, we see virtue, like health and artistic beauty, as a precarious achievement dangerously poised on a number of fine adjustments and liable at any moment to lose that poise and fall into its opposite. For the ingredients of good and of bad are precisely the same.

Now the antithesis of matter and form, as conceived by Aristotle, is not absolute. There is not something which is eternally and essentially material. What we refer to in a given context as matter is a substance actually so organised as to occupy a certain defined position in the scale of being, but capable also of being raised by further organisation to a



higher level. When the higher level is reached, those to whom the whole scale of being is open will recognise a new creation. What was a piece of marble has become the figure of a god. But it is none the less still a piece of marble; and in terms of the lower or material level the earlier and later states are only quantitatively differentiated. Every feature of the finished product can be exhaustively expressed in such terms. But though the alterations made by the sculptor's chisel are in a sense completely accounted for from the material side, they cannot be understood without recourse to the higher level. Until we bring to our aid specifically artistic conceptions, the shape given to the marble by the sculptor remains obscure and accidental, just one among infinite other possible dispositions of the material. From the higher level the lower point of view is not cancelled, but it is transcended. We see that the elements in the lower organisation have been induced, without prejudice to that organisation, to redispense themselves so as to become the vehicle of a higher order and organisation.

We may recall here Abt Vogler's expression of wonder at the miracle of harmony:

*And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to  
man*

*That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound,  
but a star.*

But if Aristotle is right, the case of music is in no way exceptional. It is merely one among innumerable other examples of a universal law of natural development. In every natural process latent potentialities are evoked, and the method of this



evocation is always in principle the same – the quantitative adjustment of actualities by which actualities of a higher order are generated. Quantity is the appointed mediator between matter and form. Plato had already said this in his myth of the creation. “Before that time,” he wrote, “all things were without ratio or measure. But when the creator set himself to order the whole, he first differentiated this confusion by means of shapes and numbers.” (*Timaeus* 53 a, b.)

## 3

The doctrine which I have outlined seems, on the face of it, to have much to recommend it, both in its more general aspect and in its special application to the field of ethics. In ethics it seems to hold out the promise of fairly meeting two demands which I think we are most of us nowadays inclined and entitled to make of an ethical theory; that it shall exhibit virtue or goodness as a positive achievement, and not as a mere negation, and that it shall offer an escape from the dualism of the moral and the natural which unsystematic reflection on the problem of conduct is apt to fall into, not without support from ethical writers. This theory would have us believe that in these ethical developments man is not deserting or defying nature, but building naturally on the natural. The good man is not required to forego the satisfaction of any native instinct or impulse: he is merely to discriminate and watch occasions. Moderation is no doubt enjoined; but this is not a uniform mean intensity of emotion and desire. The appropriate degree of intensity will vary in general within wide limits,



but in the particular case will be determined more narrowly, with reference to the situation, in the interest of a total effect. On these terms, it seems, we need not fear to meet either the ascetic or the sensualist: to both we shall have our answer. The doctrine gives us also a point of view which should enable us to go much of the way with the modern psychologist, who states the problems of character in terms of repressions and sublimations of impulse.

As a general theory also the doctrine seems to have a curious affinity, in spite of a fundamental difference in the point of view, with modern theories of Nature. It is not surprising that an evolutionary biologist like Darwin found Aristotle far the most congenial of the ancient writers on his subject. The modern scientific metaphysics of emergent evolution must certainly find a serious obstacle in Aristotle's fundamental disbelief in the possibility that natural process can ever, in the world considered as a whole, bring any genuine novelty to birth. But the principle we are considering is to some extent detachable from this general presupposition, and may claim from these enquirers also at least a respectful interest. We have indeed a recent example of a comprehensive metaphysical scheme, based fundamentally on the natural sciences, which seems to appropriate the Aristotelian principle, thus detached, as a general formula of evolution. General Smuts' book *Holism and Evolution* may be described without serious inaccuracy as a reassertion of the Aristotelian point of view, corrected by the recognition of time and process as ultimate in reality.

It will advance our argument, and lead us eventually back to conduct, if we consider one point



in General Smuts' Aristotelianism in some little detail. There is a passage in which, apparently at some friend's request, he states shortly his attitude to Prof. Lloyd Morgan's conception of emergent evolution. He explains that in spite of much agreement there is an essential diversity of theme and emphasis in their thought. "To him," he says (p. 321, note), "emergence of the new in the evolution of the universe is the essential fact; to me there is something more fundamental – the character of wholeness, the tendency to wholes, ever more intensive and effective wholes, which is basic to the universe, and of which emergence or creativeness is but one feature, however important it is in other respects. Hence he lays all the emphasis on the feature of emergence, while I stress wholes or Holism as the real factor, from which emergence and all the rest follow."

The issue here is the same as that which divided Plato and Aristotle from certain thinkers of their own day. You will remember how in Plato's *Phaedo* Socrates is represented as complaining of the stupidity of those who think that his presence in the prison, sitting quietly in conversation with his friends, waiting for the poison which will end his life, can be explained completely in terms of the tension and relaxation of the muscles and sinews of the body. For the full statement of the matter, he suggested, another order of causation must be brought in, which refers to purpose and contemplated good. Similarly General Smuts is dissatisfied with a view of evolution which sees a novelty as generated merely by the behaviour of certain pre-existent things, which uses the term emergence to



suggest at once that it is and that it is not accounted for by their behaviour. He asks leave to introduce into the process, as an active factor, *the whole* which in the process is maintained and advanced. This is essentially a demand that causation of the normal type, in which the parts determine the whole, shall be supplemented by a causation of another order, in which the whole determines the parts: it is in short a demand that the material shall be supplemented by the formal cause; and this formal cause, he adds, is to be taken as the supreme cause, "the real factor, from which emergence and all the rest follow." What he is protesting against is essentially materialism, *i.e.* the view that the lower determines the higher, and the ground of his protest is in the end the same as that of Plato and Aristotle, that such a view leaves the world-process to the guidance of chance.

I said some time ago that there were three questions that had to be answered in order to apply the Aristotelian principle to conduct. We were to specify the form, the matter, and the actuating principle of the process in which the appropriate matter comes to receive its form. To the first two of these questions I have given some answer; but the third has not yet been considered. Our reference to General Smuts and to his conception of a whole which is an active factor in process brings us back to it. It is clearly Aristotle's view that in a complex which is raised to a higher power by quantitative manipulation the ingredients are not self-regulating. The desires and emotions do not just dispose themselves in the pattern which is virtue. What then is it that presides over their evolutions?



It might be supposed that Aristotle would find the actuating principle in intelligence. It is intelligence, undoubtedly, that enables the architect to devise the architectural form which he embodies in the wood and stone of a building. It is intelligence equally that enables the physician to devise a means for restoring the order of the human body, bringing health out of sickness. But the architect and the physician are separated from that on which they work. To conceive the intelligence of the man who grows in virtue as actuating that growth would be to assert a similar separation between his intelligence and his emotional nature, to give intelligence a detachment and a freedom which is irreconcilable with any sound psychology. Hence, though Aristotle will say that the right state of the practical intelligence necessarily presupposes the presence of every virtue, he makes it sufficiently clear that this unerring judgment of value is only to be secured as the fruit of sound discipline in emotion and action. Consequently the objection which he thinks himself most likely to meet is that his theory of virtue reduces the intelligence to impotence; for the justice and courage and temperance which it rightly values must already be possessed before it can rightly value them. The guiding principle then of the development must be sought elsewhere.

We have here surely a genuine difficulty, which General Smuts' formula of Holism equally has to face. How can that which is to be born, which therefore does not yet exist, control the process which brings it to birth? Of course any complex at any moment in its development may be regarded as some sort of a whole; and it may be important to recognise



in the behaviour of any living thing a factor describable as the reaction of the whole in this sense on the components. But if the whole is no more than this, it can only be a conservative influence: it cannot be a principle reaching out beyond the actual to new creations. Holism in this sense may point to a real factor, but not to a factor from which emergence follows. If emergence is to follow, the whole which operates as an active factor in the process must be the whole which the process is generating; and such a whole as operative the argument will not grant us.

From this difficulty, which appears and reappears in the most varied forms, Aristotle seeks to extricate himself in a variety of ways. His stock phrase "man begets man" puts the grown man firmly before the baby in time, as actuating the process by which another fully equipped creature of the same kind comes gradually into existence. His assertion that there is a divine principle in all things suggests, rather vaguely, an unlimited capacity in each thing to transcend its actual limits. A similar suggestion is conveyed by his free use of terms of desire or appetite at every level of being, as though these terms implied a direction towards an absolute good. The famous chapter in the *Metaphysics* which exhibits God as the unmoved mover, who draws the love of all things to his changeless perfection and so accounts for all the movements of the world, is only the final substantiation of these tendencies. Here at last is an actual absolute perfection, capable of accounting for any approximation to itself in the detail of the system which it completes.

On the human level and in the special case of the moral problem Aristotle certainly finds in man a



general desire or wish for good unqualified, which he seems to relate to appetites like hunger and thirst much as he relates thought to sensation. One might expect therefore that moral development would be mainly actuated, so far as it is actuated from without, by persuasion or instruction from those who know and are therefore qualified to teach what is really good, so that through a pupil's intelligence a re-orientation of his whole life may be effected. For he will surely seek the good which he desires, once he is shown what it is and convinced that there are ways of getting it. But in fact Aristotle is far from any such view. He does mention casually that instruction has some part to play in moral development, but he gives no special emphasis or detail to his assertion. Clearly he had no temptation to the overdrawn confidence of men like Godwin in the omnipotence of truth and the all-sufficiency of persuasion. It is on education that he like them relies; but his education is not an affair of teaching and preaching which shall mould men's lives through their opinions, such as the French Revolution looked for: it is a much wider conception. The forces of a fully organised and equipped social life continuously operating on the citizen from the very moment of his birth through every channel by which such forces can operate – these are Aristotle's educators. So far as he does not rely on some hidden internal spring of virtue or on some half-mystical conception of Nature as predetermining the issue of the processes in which she consists, the formative influence on which he relies is that of the organised city-state. The whole structure of his *Ethics* and *Politics* implies this.



## 4

We have now spent a considerable time wandering about the territory in which the theory of the Mean is at home, and we must prepare to return to our own country with some report of our wanderings. It is the problem of conduct and the conception of the moral good with which we are specially concerned. It is on this side that we are particularly invited to compare the two countries. But as soon as we try to do this, we find comparison difficult. While we remain within the circle of Greek ideas, the doctrine seems interesting and enlightening and leaves little opening to damaging criticism. But we turn to our modern authors, and the whole matter wears a fundamentally different aspect. We are confronted at once with plain and absolute distinctions between right and wrong, with a magisterial conscience which anticipates the divine sentence on the evil-doer, with the stern law-giver duty. In place of an order gradually achieved through discipline and enjoying its own perfection, we are asked to accept the intimidating thunders of the categorical imperative. Even our utilitarians, who are frankly at war with this side of our tradition, demand that the development of the self shall be strictly subordinated to the service of humanity. What is the meaning of this difference?

If we look at the records we possess of the conduct of the ancient Greeks and consider the contemporary judgments upon it that have been preserved, we do not find that their estimates differed at all widely from ours. There may be differences of emphasis, but on the whole they admired the same



things that we admire and in much the same degree. For them, as for us, it was an act of signal heroism when a man voluntarily gave his life for his friend or for his country or for a principle. Asceticism – the call to the extirpation of the passions – is no modern invention. It was an alternative almost as present to Aristotle as to ourselves. There is of course the great difference between the two ages that the one has the Christian ideal before it and the other had not; and to this, if you like, you may credit the whole difference in the point of view. But if I am right in saying that the actions praised and blamed by the Greeks were in the main the same as those we praise and blame to-day, there still remains a question worth asking about the Greeks. Why did they – or more particularly, why did Aristotle – fail to see the supreme significance of such actions of self-sacrifice and self-denial as those we have mentioned, or try to reduce them by some spurious arithmetic to cases of self-seeking? Was there perhaps some element in the general attitude which forced these into the background? Why has duty so small a place in Aristotle's thought that there is not even a word for it?

The answer seems to me to be in brief this. What the theory we have been considering has defined, and on the whole defined rightly, is the terms on which that power of free self-determination, which we call will, can be attained and maintained. It is a victory over internal disorder. What the theory has failed to define is the conditions of the exercise of that freedom when it has been attained. The answer to this second and more important question is what we miss both in their Ethics and in their Politics;



and its absence is the reason for the absence of any account of either duties or rights.

The general principle of Aristotle's thought is sometimes called an immanent teleology. That is, he thinks of the movements of all things as directed to an end, but to an end within themselves; he thinks of all natural movement as self-realisation. In following his thought on the ethical plane we have moved throughout, in obedience to his directions, within the circle of the self, with its development and perfection for our ultimate term. We have seen how within that circle order requires the acceptance of due limits by each component of the whole. We have watched the whole, which is the self, imposing limits on its subordinates and components. But we have not placed the self in any wider context in which similarly the demand of order and system would require its subordination. It is only when from such a wider point of view we see individual wills in co-operation that duty and self-sacrifice come into view. On its more negative side duty appears as a restraint upon the individual and a limitation of his freedom of choice. But this negative is only the shadow cast by a positive. As a member of a community which he with other individuals forms – a family, a club, a city or a nation – he has to accept principles of conduct which cannot be deduced from a study of his nature alone, but only from the study of the new combination into which he enters. We have failed to reach this point because Aristotle failed to reach it. His immanent teleology issues in an ethics which stops short at the frontiers of morality.

This summary estimate of the elements of truth



and untruth in the doctrine we have been considering may seem to have one very paradoxical feature. Classical Greek theory tended to join ethics and politics; we separate them. Classical Greek theory aggrandised the state as the custodian of morality: we refuse to trust it so far. The Greek, we have been taught to think, was before all things a citizen. If that is so, it may be said, there must be something wrong with an analysis which traces the difference between their ethical view and ours to lack of recognition on their part of the social foundations of the moral problem. A full discussion of this objection would require a detailed comparison of ancient and modern theories of government, which is here out of the question. Such a comparison would soon show how treacherous some of our familiar labels are. We moderns are individualists perhaps in a sense in which they were not; but they are individualists, too, even more obstinately and profoundly, in their own way. Modern individualism has given a negative colour to theories of government, prescribing limits to its action and responsibility, where the Greeks seem to make no reserve. "The City," says Aristotle, "must mould to its purpose the bodies of new born babies." The modern reader shudders on meeting these words. But the modern theory ever since its sensational beginnings in America and France, where it took its stand confidently on the individualism of natural rights, has always contained, in virtue of its fundamental principle of popular sovereignty, the belief that political organisation corresponds to some positive element in the will of the citizen: the citizen is agent rather than patient. We have shown already that



Aristotle's moral theory requires the State as educator, *i.e.* as a force operating on the citizen. But Aristotle is distrustful of democracy, and, if his arguments in partial endorsement of the democratic principle are examined, they will be found to contain no word suggesting that the conception of the active citizen, cardinal to modern democratic ideas, had any intrinsic attraction for him. His individualism, which is perhaps characteristically Greek, is the fundamental assumption that the activities of any living thing necessarily return upon itself, that self-realisation is the last word; and this entails a corresponding negativity in his conception of the State. As the modern individualism may fail to moralise politics, so the ancient individualism may fail to socialise ethics.

I conclude then that the apparent paradox disappears on closer examination, and that the account given may stand, at least for the present. The conception of virtue as a mean is not a counsel of caution or compromise, as Bubb Dodington and Halifax suggest. It is perfectly compatible with noble and heroic action. But, since it affords no explanation of those acts which are most admired or of the degree of admiration which they attract, it must be regarded as, ethically, of minor significance. The failure of modern moralists to take account of it has, I am afraid, after all some justification.



## XII

### EPICUREAN INDUCTION<sup>1</sup>

#### *Bibliographical Note.*

1. The transcripts of the Herculaneum Papyrus numbered 1065 were first published in *Volumina Herculaneusia Coll. Alt.*, iv., 1-47. A restored text was issued by Theodor Gomperz in his *Herkulanische Studien* I. (Teubner, 1865). Supplementary material by R. Philippson in *Rheinisches Museum*, 64 (1909) 1-38, and 65 (1910), 313-316.

2. The Papyrus has also been the subject of three monographs:

*Des Epicureers Philodemus Schrift* περὶ σημείων καὶ σημειώσεων.

By F. Bahnsch (Lyck, 1879). [A not very substantial account of the argument.]

*De Philodemus Libro qui est* περὶ σημείων καὶ σημειώσεων *et Epicureorum doctrina logica*. By R. Philippson (Berlin, 1881). [A Latin dissertation, containing a most thorough and valuable discussion of the matter of the treatise from every side.]

*Das ΣΗΜΕΙΟΝ in der aristotelischen, stoischen, epikureischen und skeptischen Philosophie*. By G. Weltring (Bonn, 1910).

3. The most important attempts to view the tract in historical perspective are contained in the two following works:

P. Natorp: *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems im Altertum* (Berlin, 1884).

A. Schmekel: *Die Philosophie der Mittleren Stoa* (Berlin, 1892).

4. The only considerable source of general information as to the unpublished portions of the Herculaneum library is the publications of Prof. W. Crönert, especially his:

*Kolotes und Menedemos* (No. VI. in Wessely's *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde*) (Leipzig, 1906).

#### I. Epicurus and Herculaneum

MANY years ago, in the introduction to his *Doxographi Graeci*, Diels called attention to the anti-Epicurean prejudice which colours the compendia of Greek philosophy composed in the days of

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, April, 1925.



eclecticism. The Epicureans are very rarely mentioned, and where they are mentioned, often it is only that they may receive a round of general abuse. He refers to the couplet of Timon's cited by Diogenes Laertius (x. 3), describing Epicurus as the last and worst of the physicists, and γραμμαδιδασκαλίδης ἀναγωγότατος ζώντων, 'an elementary school teacher who was himself the worst educated of living men.' He also cites a sentence from the Ps.-Galen's *History of Philosophy* (*Dox. Gr.*, 601, 15) to the following effect:

"Epicurus, despising, as some have supposed, the solemnity characteristic of philosophy (τῆς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν σεμνότητος), took refuge in a method (ἐπὶ τινα τρόπον) which has not approved itself to exact philosophers."

This dislike of Epicureanism seems unconsciously to have affected most modern students of ancient philosophy. And in them it manifests itself similarly, as a kind of conspiracy of silence. The power and eloquence of Lucretius' great work have brought many students into the neighbourhood, so to speak, of Epicurus' garden; but their interests have as a rule not been mainly philosophical, and consequently they have made no very determined effort to get in. The popular idea of Lucretius is that of a great mind struggling with an inadequate philosophy, whereas in the case of practically all other Roman attempts at philosophy the complete incapacity of the Roman mind to pass beyond the elegant embroidery of moral platitudes and think for itself is recognised as immediately evident. In short, while all other Roman writers are generally and rightly supposed to be presenting the philosophy which they expound at its worst, Lucretius, thanks to this traditional prejudice against the Epicureans,



is thought to be presenting Epicureanism at its best. And that best "has not approved itself."

The discovery of the Epicurean library at Herculaneum with its 2,000 burnt and lacerated rolls, mostly written by the indefatigable Philodemus, has done little to lift this cloud of prejudice. It may even be said in a certain sense to have consolidated it, by providing evidence in justification. The contents of these rolls, with very few exceptions, were found, as the immense labour of transcription and restoration proceeded, to be almost wholly destitute of philosophical significance. And even the few exceptions have been severely handicapped by the immense initial difficulties with which the interpreter is faced, owing to the fragmentary character of the text. It is more than 100 years since the library was discovered. The rate of progress may be gauged by a single instance. By general consent the most important work in the library was the *περὶ φύσεως* of Epicurus, his manual of philosophy in 37 books, of which considerable fragments were among the first transcripts published. In 1818 a very hasty restoration of a few of these, with a Latin translation and commentary, was published by Orelli. From the first the Naples authorities promised a complete edition. To this day no edition has appeared: many of the rolls are not published at all: many only in the inadequate transcripts of the *Volumina Herculansia*: and those which have been more fully treated are buried in the files of learned periodicals, usually with a promise of more adequate criticism to come. When Usener published his *Epicurea* in 1887, he felt obliged to leave this valuable source of information entirely out of account,



relying partly on one of Theodor Gomperz's many unfulfilled promises (an immediate edition), but also owing to the inherent difficulties of the task of interpretation. "Risum meruisssem," he says, "si solis apographis Neapolitanis nisus frustra temptare ausus essem." Usener's material has passed from hand to hand, but no scholar has yet ventured to risk his reputation on an edition. The Herculaneum library has, therefore, not so far helped greatly. It has rather confirmed, not only the prejudice, but the conspiracy of silence. For the student of philosophy who is not primarily a philologist may easily burn his fingers when he meddles with texts which only the most expert philologists and papyrologists, with special training in this particular field, can hope to reconstruct with any certainty.

A less fierce light beats on Philodemus than on Epicurus; and many of his works are also much better preserved. Further, the philosophical insignificance of most of these works is balanced by another consideration. Philodemus' pages are full of names and quotations, and therefore offer invaluable aid in that amusing and exciting game, so popular in the German universities, which a German professor, himself an expert practitioner, has well called the scholar's sport of source-hunting. This however is a game for experts, with peculiar and intricate rules of its own. Its philosophical results are very slight, and its measures of value are in no direct relation to the philosophical.

To this combination of circumstances seems to be due the comparative neglect of Pap. No. 1065, the logical tract which is the subject of this paper. My treatment can claim no special novelty; it is in the



main only an attempt to show that the tract deserves much more attention than it has hitherto received from students of ancient philosophy.

## II. *Logical Works in the Herculaneum Library*

The Library of Herculaneum contained a number of biographical and historical works (*e.g.*, *Index Stoicorum* and *Academicorum*), all of which seem to be by Philodemus. These are not now in question. The more properly philosophical works may be classified in the usual triad, logic, physics, and ethics; though it must of course be remembered that the Epicurean school refused to recognise logic as a separate department of philosophy. They accepted only two divisions, physics and ethics, and included logic in the former. For it was the business of physics, they said, to investigate the force of words, the nature of speech, and the grounds of consecution and contradiction. Such topics as definition, division, modes of reasoning, protection against sophisms, detection of ambiguities they rejected altogether.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Epicurean logic would be expected in any case to be far less imposing in bulk and far less central in character than, *e.g.*, that of their "dialectical" rivals, the Stoics, to say nothing of experts in quibbling like the Sceptics and Empirics.

A general survey of the library shows a heavy preponderance of ethical and semi-ethical works. Among these might even be put the *Rhetoric* of Philodemus and the treatise *On the Gods*. Physics proper seems to have been very slightly represented. It may perhaps be presumed that Philodemus'

<sup>1</sup> *Epicurea*, fr. 243 (Cicero).



circle was content in this department with the great work of the master, which suggests the inference that the leading members of the school when Philodemus attended it, Zeno of Sidon and Demetrius the Laconian, were not particularly interested in physical questions. As to logic, the library included a number of other works besides the roll under discussion. The following may be mentioned:

(1) Pap. 307. The *λογικὰ ζητήματα* of Chrysippus. Three other Stoic works are known to have been included in the Herculaneum library, but none of them deals with logical problems; and Von Arnim also claims Pap. 1020 (semi-logical) for Chrysippus (*Stoic. Vet. Frag.*, II., p. 40).

(2) Pap. 1389. "By Philodemus after Zeno's lectures . . ." (remainder of title lost). Appears to discuss definition and other topics similar to those discussed in our roll.

(3) Pap. 1003. "By Philodemus after Zeno's lectures . . ." (remainder of title lost). Discusses the firmness of conviction which characterises the philosopher.

(4) Pap. 671. (Title lost.) Discusses sense-perception.

(5) Pap. 861. (Title lost.) Seems to be controversial; but the evidence is slight.

(6) Pap. 998. (Title lost.) Judging from the fragments published by Crönert this roll is of great interest; for it appears to deal with the vexed question of the *κριτήρια*. In col. 10 he reads: *κατὰ [τὴν αἴσθησιν ἢ τὴν τῆς διανοίας ἐπιβολὴν] φανταστικὴν* (*cf. Epicur. Sent.*, xxiv).

Crönert thinks that (2) (4) and (6) probably belong



to the *De Signis*. Our roll ends, as he points out, by promising in the concluding portion of the treatise an examination of the views of certain physicians. It is evidently the last roll but one of a work in at least three rolls.<sup>1</sup>

### III. *Philodemus*

Practically nothing is known of Philodemus except what can be gathered from the pages of Cicero and from his own writings. Obviously he had been trained in the Garden at Athens while Zeno of Sidon presided over it, *i.e.*, somewhere about 100 B.C., and presumably he took a good degree in what was at that time a vigorous and flourishing school of philosophy. Demetrius Lacon was probably associated with Zeno in the management of the School, which had recently renewed its youth under the strenuous guidance of Apollodorus, called the Garden-Tyrant (Kepotyrannus), a martinet, one must suppose, and the author of over 400 books not one of which has survived. Zeno and Demetrius had been pupils of Apollodorus and may be supposed to have carried on his traditions. What Philodemus may have done before he comes into view in Italy one can only guess; but sometime before the middle of the first century he seems to have settled on the shore of the gulf of Naples as a member of the household of Piso and the centre of

<sup>1</sup> Of the six papyri above mentioned (1) has been edited by Crönert in *Hermes* 36 (1901) and by Von Arnim in *Stoic. Vet. Frag.*, II., pp. 96-110. The remainder are unpublished. What scanty information is available about them will be found in this same article in *Hermes* and in Crönert's *Kolotes und Menedemos*, p. 103, n. 498. Scott in his *Fragmenta Herculanensia*, p. 29, suspected that Pap. 1012 belonged to the *De Signis*: but Crönert's fuller report of this roll in *K. u. M.*, pp. 115 ff., refutes this. His ascription to Demetrius Lacon is probably correct. The Papyrus is included in De Falco's *Demetrio Lacone* (Naples, 1923).



a circle of well-to-do Italians, students of the Epicurean philosophy. Philodemus' epigrams in verse, as well as the careful and elaborate style of his writings, show him to be something of a *littérateur*. In his prose writings he pretends to no originality. He is evidently more a writer on philosophy than a philosopher. At least three of the titles of his works, apart from that under discussion, avow derivation from the lectures of Zeno (ἐκ τῶν Ζήνωνος σχολῶν), and other sources are from time to time mentioned. On the other hand, Diels<sup>1</sup> praises his careful and accurate treatment of his sources in the *περὶ εὐσεβείας*, emphasising his superiority over his fluent and superficial contemporary Cicero; and of his other works, so far as external checks are available, no complaint has been made. We have no reason therefore to distrust his report of Epicurean teaching, so far as industry, honesty, and goodwill are concerned.

The question may be asked, did Philodemus write these works for general circulation or only for his Epicurean group which centred in Piso? Philippson<sup>2</sup> points to certain traces of hasty composition in the *De Signis* as evidence that this work was written for the circle rather than for the general public; but the evidence is not very conclusive, and he seems to regard the *De Signis* as exceptional. It is quite possible that some of the works were occasioned by the special needs of the circle; but composition on such a scale must have meant prolonged and continuous activity over a number of years. Philodemus must probably be regarded as a habitual writer who wrote for publication and as only secondarily a teacher; and if our tract is really, as seems probable,

<sup>1</sup> *Dox. Gr.*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *De Philodemi Libro*, etc., p. 6.



only a part of a larger work, it seems likely that the roughnesses point rather to a lack of final revision than to a restricted circle of readers. Would a writer so carefully avoid hiatus if his writings were merely intended for the eyes of a few friends?

#### IV. *Contents of the "De Signis"*

When rolls are destroyed obviously the outer portions will be destroyed first and consequently it is nearly always the case with the Herculaneum papyri that the best preserved portions are the innermost, *i.e.*, the ends of books.

The *περὶ σημείων* is an exceptionally well-preserved roll. Gomperz's edition gives 38 columns of 38 or 39 lines each and two fragments. There is no doubt as to the sequence of the columns, which offer a continuous text capable of pretty certain restoration to its original form. There are gaps, but these are not very serious. They are made to look more serious than they are in Gomperz's edition by his decision to keep out of the text all restorations which were highly conjectural. There are six other fragments, two of which have been restored by Philippson, and a small quantity of further additional material has been published by Philippson and Crönert.

The 38 columns are the last 38 of the book. The beginning is lost. I have been unable to find any estimate of the probable extent of the loss. Judging by the length of the book as it stands in comparison with other Philodemus rolls, I should judge that the amount lost is small.

#### *Argument.*

The argument of the book, as it stands, falls into four main divisions according to the four sources followed.



*Part I. Col. 1-19. Dionysius' objections and Zeno's replies.*

(a) The book opens in the middle of the statement of certain objections brought against Epicurean theories by a Stoic named Dionysius. It soon appears that what is missing here is the first three objections: the remaining six are preserved.

(b) There follow Zeno's replies to these objections.

*Part II. Col. 19-27. Supplement based on Bromios.*

Philodemus introduces this as follows (19, 4): "In discoursing to us Zeno expounded the foregoing arguments of the opposition and replied to them as I have said. But Bromios told me that the following confirmations of the objections (πιστώματ' αὐτῶν) and further replies (συναντήματα) were also expounded. There follow objections and replies very similar to those already discussed.

Philodemus seems himself to have had some doubt as to the value of this Bromios Supplement. For he ends this part with the following words (27, 33): "It may be thought that these arguments of the opposition are different from the foregoing and have met different replies; or, on the other hand, that some only are new and these not very well composed, since Zeno dealt with the matter more thoroughly in another place before or after this refutation." (This translation follows Philippson's restoration, of which the latter part is perhaps not quite satisfactory).

*Part III. Col. 28-29. The Demetriadum.*

Philodemus says he will not any longer follow the arguments of the opposition and take them *seriatim*. He will now consider them as a whole and exhibit their general weaknesses (διηκούσας κακίας). A



concise summary of these lies, he says, ready to hand in the *Demetriadum* (ἐν τῷ Δημητριάκῳ σφόδρ' ἐπιτόμως ἔκκεται). This he next retails. It is a short passage, and the treatment is most summary. Each underlying weakness is introduced by τὸ followed by an infinitive – "their not having seen that . . ." This suggests that the source is simply copied out.

*Part IV. Col. 29–end.*

The transition to this section from the last is unfortunately lost, and there has been some difference of opinion as to its source. After the gap containing the transition the first clear sentence begins – καὶ πρῶτον μὲν εἶφη. It is therefore a report of a lecture or conversation; and certain differences of emphasis from Parts I. and II. justify the view that the speaker is not Zeno. Most probably he is Demetrius. Natorp takes him for Apollodorus the Garden-Tyrant, whom he supposes to have originated this development of Epicureanism. The subject of this concluding section is the same as that of the third, *i.e.* the general faults of the Stoic arguments. The section (and the book) concludes with the following words – "The sayings and writing of certain physicians concerning inference by resemblance we will consider, if our digestion will stand it and nothing else prevents, in the concluding portion of our discourse."

Certain points arising out of this survey of the book may be dealt with at once.

1. The Dionysius referred to is no doubt Dionysius of Cyrene, a Stoic of the generation previous to Posidonius, who had some reputation as a mathematician. Perhaps a younger contemporary of Panaetius and an older contemporary of Zeno.



He also represents the Stoics in *περὶ θεῶν*  $\bar{\alpha}$ , col. 9,<sup>1</sup> and there seem to be traces of him in other rolls.<sup>2</sup> Apart from Herculaneum he is practically unknown, but there is a passing mention by Tertullian, who says of him that he recognised three kinds of God, visible, invisible, and deified men.<sup>3</sup> Crönert remarks that his work seems to have been obscured by the fame of his great successor Posidonius.

2. Bromios also turns up in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>4</sup> He is there referred to as a close friend (*τὸν φίλτατον*) of Philodemus who has written a work *περὶ τεχνῶν*. He was no doubt a contemporary of Philodemus in the school. The supplement contributed by Bromios must be supposed to have been an account of a lecture by Zeno or of conversation with him when Philodemus was not present.

3. The *Demetriadum*, as I have called it (supplying *βιβλίον*), seems to be taken by all writers on this work to be the name of a work by Demetrius Lacon. None of them give any explanation of the curious title or nickname of this work, though Natorp suggests that the work was more explicitly described in an earlier lost reference. Surely it can hardly have been a title, if the work was written by Demetrius. But I suppose it might have been a nickname current in the school for a compendium of logic written by Demetrius. I should like to know if there are any parallels to a name of this kind.

Our knowledge of Demetrius Lacon is almost entirely derived from Herculaneum. Seven Herculanean rolls bear his name, and Crönert has made

<sup>1</sup> *Philodemos über die Götter: erstes Buch* (H. Diels), p. 55 (*Abhandlungen of the Berlin Academy*, 1916).

<sup>2</sup> See Crönert, *Kol. u. Men.*, p. 123 and Schmekel, *Ph. d. mitt. Stoa*, Index, s.v.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Diels, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Ed. Sudhaus, Vol. I., p. 64.



out a good case for attributing several other rolls to him.<sup>1</sup>

As to the argument itself: it will be observed that from beginning to end we have elaborate and involved controversy – criticisms by Stoics, answered first *seriatim* and then in general. No part of the book states directly the doctrine criticised or an alternative to it. This creates a curious problem in interpretation. In controversy men are apt to use a mixed terminology, part their own and part their opponents'. It is a matter requiring nice judgment to dissect a controversy like the present at the joints, so that each party has its own and no more. What different results different temperaments may arrive at in such a case is excellently seen by comparing Natorp with Schmekel.<sup>2</sup> Each constructs a pretty theory of *σημείωσις* for the school of his choice, but Schmekel complains that Natorp was only able to do so well by the Epicureans because of his ignorance of Stoicism, and Natorp could probably have reversed the statement on Schmekel. In fact each is trying to claim all the sensible logical doctrine he can find in the book for one of the parties.

Lastly, it will be noticed that in the book as we have it Philodemus seems merely to have put his four sources together without attempting to effect anything more than a purely external relation between them. As Schmekel says (p. 16), "Philodem hat nichts weiter getan als seine Quellen in der einfachsten Weise aneinander zu reihen."

<sup>1</sup> *Kol. u. Men.*, pp. 100–125. Crönert's reconstruction of Demetrius Lacon is one of the most brilliant performances of a remarkable book. V. de Falco's recent *L'Epicureo Demetrio Lacone* (Naples, 1923) is the direct product of this section of Crönert's book, and presents a complete edition of the remains of Demetrius as reconstructed.

<sup>2</sup> See Bibliographical Note for works referred to.



V. *The Theory of Signs*

The subject of our tract is Signs and Signification, if "signification" may be used to stand for inference from signs. But before dealing with the treatise itself it will be well to consider some external evidence as to what this Theory of Signs was.

After Aristotle's familiar account of Signs in the *Prior Analytics* (ii., 27) there seems to be a blank of some centuries. Aristotle's definition was as follows — οὐδ' ὄντος ἔστιν ἢ οὐδ' γενομένου πρότερον ἢ ὕστερον γέγονε τὸ πρᾶγμα, τοῦτο σημεῖον ἐστὶ τοῦ γεγονέναι ἢ εἶναι. The argument was an unsatisfactory attempt at demonstration by means of a sign or symptom, this being a phenomenon adduced as evidence of the existence, prior, simultaneous, or posterior, of another related phenomenon. There were three varieties corresponding to the three figures of the syllogism. The examples given were (1) pregnancy inferred from the presence of milk; (2) pregnancy inferred from paleness; (3) the goodness of the wise inferred from the goodness of Pittacus. The theory of the Sign is an unimportant feature of Aristotle's logic; but the phrase σημεῖον δέ, introducing confirmation of a suggested explanation, is of course exceedingly common in Aristotle's non-logical writings.

Apart from this passage and certain scattered medical testimonies, which deserve a more careful examination than I have been able to give them, we hear nothing further of Signs until we come to Sextus Empiricus, the sceptical physician of the second century A.D.<sup>1</sup> In him, to our surprise, we find the

<sup>1</sup> Zeno of Citium is said to have written a tract περὶ σημείων, but nothing is known as to its contents. I assume with Pearson (*Frag. of Zeno and Cleanthes*, p. 29) that this was not a logical work, but probably a treatise on divination. We have a fairly detailed knowledge of Chrysippus' logical treatises, and in them so far as is known σημεῖον in its logical sense does



Sign elevated to the rank of a main logical topic. Both the *Hypotyposes* and the books *Against the Dogmatics* investigate at length the nature of Signs, and attempt to prove that no good case has been made out for their existence in the form in which philosophers assert it. Unfortunately Sextus makes even less attempt than usual to keep clear the contributions of the different schools of philosophy, and it is often difficult to say with certainty whom he is attacking.

In both treatises the discussion of the Sign is followed by a discussion of Demonstration. Sometimes (*e.g.* *Dogm.*, ii., 260), sign and demonstration is presented as an exhaustive disjunction comparable to Aristotle's disjunction, ἐπαγωγή and συλλογισμός. But we are also more than once informed<sup>1</sup> that ἀπόδειξις is τῷ γένει σημεῖον, "demonstration is generically a sign." The word σημεῖον had in fact come to be used of all proof or inference, of which the main sub-divisions were σημεῖον proper and ἀπόδειξις.<sup>2</sup> The narrower use of σημεῖον is clearly the more natural use, since Sextus at least twice answers the question τί ἐστι σημεῖον without referring to ἀπόδειξις.

The main points in Sextus' evidence seem to be the following:—

not occur. It is unlikely that a topic so unimportant to Chrysippus should have received a tract to itself from Zeno. The arguments of Schmekel (*op. cit.*, p. 341) to the opposite effect are to me unconvincing. They do not appear to have convinced Von Arnim, to judge from his first volume. In his second volume (Chrysippus) he prints long extracts from Sextus by themselves in a section headed περὶ σημείων. But this is in small print, and we are warned in the preface to the whole that matter in small print is not to be taken as attributed to Chrysippus, but only as exhibiting "aliquam necessitudinem" with his doctrine (*Stoic. Vet. Frag.*, I., v.)

<sup>1</sup> *e.g.*, *Dogm.*, ii., 277 and 289.

<sup>2</sup> The ambiguity of σημεῖον is recognised by Sextus (*Dogm.*, ii., 143). (In citing Sextus I refer only to *Dogm.* The parallel passages in *Hyp.* are to be found in Mutschmann's Teubner text noted at the foot of the page. The general references for the discussion as a whole are *Hyp.*, ii., 97-133; *Dogm.*, ii., 141-299.)



1. Things are either observed or unobserved (*πρόδηλα* — *ἄδηλα*), and the unobserved are of three kinds, (a) *καθάπαξ* — finally and utterly beyond man's grasp, e.g., the number of grains of sand in the African desert: (b) *φύσει* — eternally concealed from observation, e.g., minute structural features of bodies or the infinite void beyond the world: (c) *πρὸς καιρόν* — temporarily obscured, e.g., the city of Athens from us now. (*Dogm.*, ii. 145 ff.)

2. With regard to the first no sign will help: but of the second and third it is supposed that information can be obtained by signs. This in two ways: (a) there is the sign of reminder (*ὑπομνηστικόν*) recalling to mind something frequently found accompanying it in experience. Thus smoke is taken as a sign of a present fire, a scar of a past wound, a wound in the heart of coming death. All these are of *πρὸς καιρόν ἄδηλα*. (b) There is the sign of discovery (*ἐνδεικτικόν*), which is postulated for the sake of the *φύσει ἄδηλα*. Here association will evidently not explain the inference, and the sign must be supposed to reveal the unseen by its own power and constitution. In this sense the observed movements of the human body are taken as a sign justifying the assertion of the existence and character of the unobserved human soul. Sextus is ready to concede the validity of the sign of reminder: it is the sign of discovery alone that he contests (ii. 151 ff.).

3. The Stoic definition of a sign was *ἀξίωμα ἐν ὑγιεῖ συνημμένῳ καθηγούμενον ἐκκαλυπτικόν τοῦ λήγοντος*, "the antecedent member of a sound conjunction revelatory of the consequent." An important point in this rather technical definition is the reduction of signification to a hypothetical, of which the antecedent gives the sign



and the consequent the signified. It is to be presumed that this definition was intended to cover all signs, and not merely the sign of discovery. As one instance, Sextus gives a variant of an Aristotelian example – “If this woman has milk, she has had a child.” (The signified is no longer a present state, but a past event.) (ii., 245, 252.)

4. The authors of the definition quoted say a sign must be *παρὸν παρόντος*: *i.e.*, they reject such inference as from scar to past wound and from wound to coming death. Clearly they must also reject the example from childbirth given above. But Sextus goes on to argue that in a sense these are all *παρὸν παρόντος*, as though not quite certain on this point (ii., 254 f.).

5. Signification, says Sextus, is seen in sailors, farmers, and dogs – not merely in logicians. It is not plain how far his opponents would admit this. But it appears to be common ground that it is freely used in the arts (ii., 270).

6. Sextus says (ii. 156) that the sign of discovery is the fiction of the dogmatic philosophers and the rationalist (*λογικοί*) physicians. He seldom mentions a particular sect. He notes (ii. 177) that according to Epicurus and the leaders of his school the sign was an *αἰσθητόν*, while the Stoics held it to be a *νοητόν*; and other differences between sects less relevant to our purpose are occasionally noted. On one occasion (ii., 275), the *δογματικοί* are said to maintain a view which is plainly Stoic, and on the whole it seems probable that throughout the section the Stoics are mainly in view. But it does not of course follow that the theory of the Sign was an integral part of Stoic logic. It may have been an Epicurean development,



to which the Stoics developed in controversy an alternative. It appears from one passage (ii. 215) that the *Pyrrhonean Discourses* of Aenesidemus treated fully of the Sign, which takes the controversy back to the time of Philodemus; but there is no direct evidence in Sextus taking it further back.

There is another fragment of external evidence outside the pages of Sextus. The Ps.-Galen's *History of Philosophy* (*Dox. Gr.*, p. 605) operates with a disjunction, Sign and Syllogism, identical with that of Sextus. The same two kinds of sign are given. The same definition is cited as that of the "Dialecticians"; and the same example of signification (from present milk to past child-bearing) is adduced.

## VI. *The Doctrine of the "De Signis"*

The general problem of inference is to find a basis in experience for assertion which goes beyond experience. Such a basis is called a *sign*, the fact based upon it the *signified* (σημειωτόν). The sign must of course be direct unquestioned experience (ἐναργές, etc.). The inference is called generally transition (μετάβασις), or more particularly signification (σημείωσις). The corresponding verbs (μεταβαίνειν, σημειοῦσθαι) are used. In one passage συλλογίζεσθαι is used for σημειοῦσθαι (16, 30).

Some instances will make these formulæ clearer. There are two stock instances which frequently recur. (1) Inference from the mortality of men within our experience to assertion of mortality of man without qualification: "Since men with us (παρ' ἡμῶν) are mortal, all men whatever are mortal." In this case we have the assertion of a familiar character



in regions beyond experience. (2) The second stock instance is the well-known proposition, "If there is movement, there is void." (8, 12, 38). This is always expressed in the hypothetical form. Here we have the assertion of a conjectured entity, necessarily unobservable (*i.e.*, φύσει ἄδηλον), postulated as a condition necessary to the existence of that which is observed.

Other typical instances are the following: —

(a) Concerning *atoms*. "Since all bodies with us are coloured, or destructible, or heavy, atoms are coloured, or destructible, or heavy." The first two of these inferences would be false on the Epicurean view, but the last would be true. The distinction rests on determining in the bodies we know the precise nature of the several attributes. Weight, like resistance, is found to be inseparable from body.

(b) Concerning the *sun*. With us things which appear slowly from behind covering bodies do so either because they move slowly or because of their great size. The sun appears slowly from behind the moon. But the sun does not move slowly. If it did, it could not complete its long journey in twenty-four hours, as it does. Therefore the sun is of great size.

(c) Another interesting case is the well-known assertion of a minimal deviation of atoms from their proper line of movement. This is apparently based on the ascertained facts of chance and free will, together with the absence of evidence to the contrary in experience.

Instances given of false inferences are — that the men of Akrothoön are short-lived, because men with us are — that figs will grow anywhere because they grow with us — that eyes will grow again when



plucked out because hair does – that the area and perimeter of all squares can be designated by the same number because this is the case with  $4 \times 4$ .

These examples are sufficient to show the variety of type included in the term signification. It suggests, I think, that the Epicureans brought all real inference (in Mill's sense) under the term. If there is deduction, it would be regarded, I take it, as mere hermeneutics, reference to a register of previous observations and their legitimate extensions.

Most of these examples are stated in the form "since A with us is B, A everywhere is B." Another common form is this:—"from the fact that . . . (*ἐκ* or *ἀπὸ τοῦ* . . .), we signify concerning the fact that . . . (*σημειοῦμεθα περὶ τοῦ* . . .)." These are the commonest forms of statement. The conditional form occurs in the case of movement and the void, and occasionally elsewhere. I suspect that the Epicureans were not accustomed to express their significations generally in the conditional form, and that the insistence on reduction to this form was a purely Stoic dogma. The Stoic definition of Sign already cited requires of course such reduction. When the conditional form is used, the sign is stated in the antecedent and the thing signified in the consequent.

The question at issue between the Epicureans and the Stoics may be stated as follows. The Epicurean contention is that the method of resemblance (*ὁ καθ' ὁμοιότητα τρόπος*) is the basis of all signification whatever. All assertion which goes beyond experience, they maintain, finds its justification in the investigation of like cases found within experience. Comparison of these similar cases with identical results in each, together with the entire absence after



careful search of any indication to the contrary, is able to establish universal or essential assertions. They admit that in some fields they may have to be satisfied with probability. But whether the assertion is probable or certain, its evidence is always the same in form, *viz.*, a uniformity or constant conjunction within experience established by examination of a variety of similar cases.

The constant use of the word "like" leads one to suppose at first that this formula is intended only to cover such inferences as that from the mortality of all known men to that of all men whatever; *i.e.*, that in the phrase ὁ καθ' ὁμοιότητα τρόπος the likeness asserted is that of the observed to the unobserved rather than that of observed case to observed case. But this interpretation will not hold. It is not maintained that the asserted unseen is necessarily like the seen which is its evidence. Sometimes the extension beyond experience is effected by analogy (as in the case of mortality); and in that case the relation of unseen to seen is one of likeness. At other times we argue from an experienced effect to its unseen cause, as when we infer void from movements or atomic bodies from bodies composed of them. In these cases the unseen is cause or condition of the seen. But in these cases too the method is that of resemblance. The evidence is the results of the investigation of observed movements – like cases – leading to the hypothesis of an unseen; and this hypothesis is not confined in its application within the limits of the investigation, but is extended to cover all movement whatever. Thus all inference is by resemblance, or, as the author of Part IV. says, the only form of signification is the method of resemblance.



The opposition contends that the essential feature of all extensions of knowledge beyond experience is what they call the method of removal (ὁ κατ' ἀνασκευὴν τρόπος). They take as typical the Epicurean proposition, "if there is movement, there is void." Here, they say, there is no real question of resemblance. Movement is not like void, nor void like movement; nor is the problem to find warrant for extending what is observed to hold good within experience to similar fields beyond it. The argument is really this: if there is movement, there must be void; for if void were removed from the world movement would cease. The contention might, I suppose, be put in the form that universal affirmative propositions are established indirectly by means of the contra-positive, not directly by means of the examination of what Mill calls positive instances. "All men are mortal," for instance, is guaranteed (if at all) by the evident truth of the proposition, "No not-mortal is man."<sup>1</sup>

This argument from removal, then, say the Stoics, is the essential feature of all sound signification, even as the Epicureans themselves employ it. Analogy and resemblance may perhaps be of some use in the preliminary stages of investigation; but there is no real sign which does not stand in this relation to the signified, that the refusal to accept the inference means its destruction.

The procedure which I attribute to the Stoics is closely parallel to that of the Epicureans. The

<sup>1</sup> Schmekel (*op. cit.*, p. 302, n. 2) regards this contention apparently as a proof of Stoic acuteness, and as an essential point in their championship of rational insight into the mutual implication of facts against the coarse empiricism of the Epicureans, basing itself on mere agreement or on simple enumeration. But I do not find the rights and wrongs of the matter so plain as that, as the sequel will show.



Epicureans took a term which *prima facie* meant argument by analogy and extended it to cover cases in which the central feature of the inference did not appear to be analogy. The Stoics start with a term which is *prima facie* appropriate only to the non-analogical cases, and insist on extending it to cover the analogical. In short, the Stoics claim everything for their "removal" as the Epicureans claim everything for their "resemblance."

The Epicureans, in reply, insist on confining removal to arguments on all fours with that about void and movement, *i.e.*, to cases in which the inferred unseen is a condition invented to account for an undisputed fact. In such cases, they admit, the hypothesis is properly tested by removal, by considering whether the denial of the consequent (the supposed necessary condition) necessarily involves the non-existence of the indisputable fact which is its alleged ground or antecedent. But even in these cases, they say, removal is only a test, or, in Mill's charming phrase, an indispensable collateral security. It is not here, or anywhere, a *form* of signification. It does not and cannot of itself lead to any extension of experience beyond its inevitable limitations. What it tests is an extension for which the real evidence is provided by resemblance. And further, to most extensions of this kind it is wholly inapplicable. When, *e.g.*, we extend the fact of human mortality, guaranteed within our experience, indefinitely beyond its limits, the removal of the contemplated unseen, *viz.* other men, gives no result. The Epicureans therefore contend that exclusive emphasis on removal makes all inference from the seen to the unseen impossible, and that, apart from



that, the importance of removal is much exaggerated by the Stoics. To many fruitful extensions removal is inapplicable, and while it is true that the inconceivability of the opposite is a legitimate aim, this can be and is established by resemblance alone without any aid from removal whatsoever.

Thus the Epicureans claim that propositions which are necessary and universal can be established by the study of resemblances. Both sides, it seems, agreed to state such propositions by means of words like  $\hat{\eta}$  and  $\kappa\alpha\theta\delta$ , e.g., "men, *qua* men, are mortal." The Stoics granted that if propositions of this kind could be secured, extension beyond experience would be achieved; but they argued that such propositions are essentially an assertion of the inconceivability of the opposite and rest on removal. Zeno (or Demetrius?) seems inclined to accept the view that without these essential propositions (as we may call them) cogent signification was impossible. He complains, however, that his careful analysis of this type of proposition has been ignored by the Stoics; and they have also, he says, ignored the strict and elaborate rules which he has made for the conduct of the investigation of resemblances which is to establish them. They talk as if any superficial resemblance were thought by him sufficient evidence for universal and necessary proposition.

We may conclude this general statement of the Epicurean position by an attempt at an account of their views on these two crucial points. The first, it will be noticed, has to fill the place in the Epicurean theory filled in Mill's by the conception of Cause, as offering a road of escape from the contingency of phenomena; and the second corresponds to the rules



of procedure enshrined in Mill's Four Experimental Methods.

We learn from the concluding section of the book that essential predication (attribution) is of four kinds, each of which gives necessity. These therefore give four distinct grounds of signification. The predicate may be – (1) a necessary concomitant (ὁ ἐξ ἀνάγκης συνέπεται): *e.g.*, man *qua* man is fleshy and liable to disease and old age:

(2) the proper formula (λόγος ἴδιος) or preconception (πρόληψις): *e.g.*, body *qua* body has bulk and resistance; man *qua* man is rational animal:

(3) a property (συμβεβηκέναι): *e.g.*, man *qua* man is [? mortal].

(4) The description of this fourth variety is lost, but three examples survive –

*The knife cuts* καθὸ ἡκόνηται,  
*Atoms are indestructible* καθὸ πλήρεις,  
*Body moves downward* καθὸ βάρος ἔχει.

The relation in these cases is clearly one of consequence which “*qua*” in our use will not render. In all other cases the “*qua*” introduces a repetition of the subject; here it introduces a third term. In fact these last instances are telescoped syllogisms in the first figure. The middle term in each case seems to be drawn from one of the foregoing three classes. The required formula seems therefore to be this – “a derivative attribute immediately consequent on one of the foregoing.” (If I am right in this, Gomperz's conjecture καθὸ ἀφρονες in ll. 18–19 must be wrong: for ἀφροσύνη cannot surely be an essential feature of anything.)

This is the whole of the evidence preserved under



this head. It is interesting as showing to what extent the Epicureans found themselves compelled to fall back on something like Aristotle's predicables in order to make knowledge possible.

*Rules of Investigation.* – No formal statement of the rules laid down for investigation is to be found in the book. There are however a number of indications which may be put together as follows. A careful survey of likenesses and differences is required<sup>1</sup> on these lines –

(1) Secure the highest possible degree of likeness (18, 19; 28).

(2) Secure the most specific likeness (*i.e.*, least general, vague, ambiguous) (18, 21).

(3) You cannot exhaust the instances, but you must make them both numerous and various (20, 30 ff.: πολλοῖς ὁμογενέσι καὶ ποικίλοις), *i.e.*, as varied as possible within the identity of kind. (Cf. Mill: "only one circumstance in common.")

(4) Do not ignore the differences, but carefully examine each in turn and so eliminate them all (πάσαν ἐκβάλλοντες παραλλαγήν, 21, 32).

(5) Do not always insist on a strict universal. You cannot always expect to find constant uniformities (κοινότητες ἀκίνητοι, 25, 36). Be content when necessary with a ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ.

(6) Before registering your conclusion, make a prolonged search for any contrary indications, either within your observation, or in the records of that of others, or in the προαποδεδειγμένα, *i.e.*, inferences already made (32, 24 ff.).

<sup>1</sup> περιδεύοντων ἡμῶν τῷ ἐπιλογισμῷ δεόντως τὰς ὁμοιότητας (17, 32). περιδεύειν is a regular Epicurean word for the systematic study of detail, and there is other evidence that ἐπιλογισμός was a technical term for the activity of thought involved. Both terms go back to Epicurus, but σημείον and its cognates, as here used, do not.



(7) In all cases the precise nature of the attribution intended must be made clear. *E.g.*, bodies are destructible. Yes: but not *qua* bodies. Only in virtue of containing the non-corporeal non-resistant void. Similarly of colour.

Thus what the Epicurean hopes to find is a conjunction persisting through difference in all experienced cases, which, in the absence of all suggestion to the contrary, may be justifiably regarded as a necessary conjunction, and so admit of extension beyond experience. What is so established may be asserted without fear of the unseen. For the seen is a fair specimen of the whole. "A thing devoid of all community with the seen is inconceivable" (21, 27). "We assume that such variety (*ποικίλματα*) as is found in experience is present also in the unseen" (25, 11). These last propositions give the Epicurean version of the assumption of the Uniformity of Nature.

If I tried to fill out this statement of the general Epicurean position with further detail, I should probably get into difficulties. There are many passages – some important – of the interpretation of which I am very doubtful. So, with apologies, I must decline to carry the exposition any further. But I should like in conclusion to state the apparent relation of this new matter furnished by the *De Signis* to the old matter furnished by Sextus Empiricus.

It seems to me inherently probable, as Philippson says, that the impulse to the formation of a theory of signs came from the medical schools. Whether he is right in seeking the origins of the Epicurean doctrine in the joint influence of Democritus and



Pyrrho on Nausiphanes, the author of the *Tripod* and reputed instructor of Epicurus, I do not feel competent to say. But the sceptical physicians may well have been sympathetic with Epicurean epistemology and may well have helped in the development of the theory. Of the Stoic view as presented by Sextus (so far as one can disentangle it) I feel that Zeno's criticism is true. It is not a theory of σημείωσις in the Epicurean sense at all. Sextus says no word of argument from resemblance, of the detailed study of resemblances, of what I called essential propositions, nor generally does he treat the problem as a problem of induction. The *De Signis* does certainly treat it in this light. It seems to me very unlikely that all this extra matter is either common to Stoics and Epicureans (as Schmekel seems to imply) or peculiar to the Stoics. It is surely far more likely that the Stoics treated the question in the dry formal way suggested by Sextus, and that so far as they did get involved in a discussion of the method of resemblance it was because Dionysius in his controversy with Zeno and Demetrius was led by them into it. I give the Stoics willingly their method of removal (of which only the faintest echo seems to have reached Sextus): but even that was probably a weapon of controversy, and the rest of the new matter furnished by the *De Signis* seems to me to be plainly Epicurean property. After all, there was no more favourable soil in Ancient Greece for a theory of Induction than the Garden of Epicurus. If Philippson, however, is right, even there it did not flourish long, but was suppressed as heretical or tiresome by Zeno's successors.



## XIII

### COURAGE<sup>1</sup>

It is seldom that the opportunity comes to a philosopher to test the theories that he has been in the habit of teaching in any crucial or decisive fashion. Yet in this present cataclysm of war many philosophers must have had just this opportunity with regard to the virtue of courage. How have their theories stood the test? Have they, like the writer, found occasion to modify or withdraw the confident assertions of the lecture-room? To the writer it seems clearly proved by his experience in action that Aristotle's account of courage is very much nearer the truth than it was generally thought to be by himself and others, discussing it with their pupils and among themselves at Oxford in the days before the war.

Courage to Aristotle is a moral virtue, *i.e.*, an acquired strength of character, attained by the exercise of a twofold control in which also it manifests itself. The control is twofold because it is partly internal, over self, and partly external, over things; and the self which is controlled is of course the emotional self. These emotions, it is implied, are not in themselves either good or bad. They are the material of virtue as of vice, and are thus required in their due measure as constituents of the virtuous act. Above or below the due measure they go to

<sup>1</sup> Written in the autumn of 1918, when the writer was an officer in the army, and printed in *Mind*, January, 1919.



make the act and character which exhibit them bad. Courage is thus a mastery of dangerous situations made possible by a mastery of the emotions which in the normal man dangerous situations arouse.

Now the emotions aroused by danger are, according to Aristotle, two: fear and an opposite which we take leave to call "cheer." Danger, so far as nothing can be done to avert or mitigate it, excites pure fear; but so far as there is promise of personal effort availing something, cheer rises to meet it. Where effort plainly avails nothing, as with men left to drown in the open sea, it is something different from courage that is demanded, since there is no glimmer of ground for cheer. Experience of any particular type of danger teaches men that there are many ways of escape to the resourceful. Hence, for example, a bad storm at sea, which overwhelms a landsman with pure fear, may be the occasion to the sailor of nothing more than ordinary courage. Cheer, as well as fear, may be allowed to exceed its measure, with bad results on conduct and character. For foolhardiness is a vice as truly as cowardice, though men are less prone to it, and its cause and manifestation is excessive indulgence in the emotion of cheer.

Such, stated briefly, and with some of the niceties of exposition slightly blurred, is Aristotle's account of the virtue of courage. The feature to which exception was generally taken was this odd emotion, opposed to fear, which we have called "cheer." It was commonly asserted that no such emotion exists, and suggested that Aristotle invented it for the sake of symmetry. But it was a curious symmetry; for a pair of opposed emotions is not a general feature of the Aristotelian analysis of the virtues of character.



Having myself been guilty in the past of just such criticisms, I think it both honest and useful publicly to avow that experience of active service leads me to the firm conviction that they are thoroughly erroneous. The emotion of cheer – I will take a better name if someone will give me one – is a real thing, not an invention of the Schools; an important fact of human nature, without which the behaviour of our citizen armies in the highly dangerous situations which prevail at this time in Flanders and elsewhere would be very much less admirable than it is. Like any other emotion it is seen most clearly in the young. In my Company I had a youth of nineteen or twenty, a lance-corporal in charge of a Lewis gun. He was a very quiet boy, always particularly smart in his turn-out and very correct in his behaviour, silent and sober and in a general way anything rather than a dare-devil. For a long time, living as we did in a quiet part of the line, we never found him out. Suddenly things became hotter, and he was transformed. As soon as the enemy put down a heavy barrage on our trench he was a different man. He bubbled with energy and impudence. Keeping up a sustained flow of vigorous language he stood on the fire-step, head and shoulders above the parapet, popping away with his gun, having to all appearance the “time of his life.” I saw him in action many times after that before he was killed, and he was always the same. Whether in attack or defence, danger invigorated and transfigured him. It was not fear he had to conquer and control, but the exhilaration produced by the sight of such splendid opportunities for the use of his darling weapon.

This is only one instance; and it is difficult to



describe it on paper so that it will carry the same conviction to others as to myself. Of course I could quote other instances, but none so clear. I have even myself, in a measure, felt the same invigoration, especially when advancing or attacking. Nearly every one I have met who has been in an even moderately successful attack, has told me that he felt a great excitement, and even a kind of enjoyment, which happily blinded him to the suffering and destruction surrounding him. We attacked once short of food and after a sleepless night, at 7.30 a.m., on a November morning. Things went well; and in the middle another officer shouted to me, "Who says the men want breakfast when there is fun like this about?" In all these cases, I think, we may trace the operation of that powerful and most blessed emotion, rising to oppose fear in the face of danger, cheer.

Let us therefore make amends to Aristotle for a wrong done, and admit, however, tardily, the justice of his analysis. Of these two, fear and cheer, duly measured and mastered by will, courage is made, a strength of character fortunately not rare in British soldiers, in whom the natural force of cheer is strong. Probably, at first or second hand, Aristotle had more experience of war than we have had, till lately, in our day.

Here is a Postscript. I have met in England quite a number of good people who appear to think that the normal man enjoys service at the front, just as I have met others in whose eyes the life is one of unrelieved hardship and misery. Those who fall into the latter error may be to some extent encouraged by the analysis attempted above. The former I would recommend, following Aristotle's hint, to work the



matter out for themselves. Let them remember that a man takes with him into the presence of the enemy his individual stock of fearfulness and cheerfulness, with whatever force of will he can command. Let them calculate what proportion of his time he spends in serious danger, and in what proportion of that danger all a man's skill and strength can avail him anything at all. They will then be in a position to reckon the chances of cheer overbalancing fear, and the strain upon the soldier's strength of will. Against rifle bullets a man may feel that strength and skill avail something; but against shells it is only too plain that they avail nothing at all. That is what makes modern warfare so exacting in its demands upon human nature.



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